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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab Affairs: Arab League To Discuss Israeli Nuclear Reactor Leak

NC0604154196 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1343 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—The Arab League Council will hold a special meeting at the level of permanent delegates on Tuesday [9 April]. It will discuss the dangers of a nuclear leak from the Israeli Dimona reactor and adopt an Arab stand on Israeli nuclear threats.

The council's meeting, called by the state of Palestine, will also discuss a message Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat sent to [Arab League Secretary General] Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid on an Arab League move to lift the Israeli blockade imposed in retaliation for recent suicide operations by Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement].

Arab League press spokesman and adviser Tal'at Hamid said the memo the General Secretariat received from the state of Palestine emphasizes that the Dimona reactor's lifespan has almost expired, that it must be discarded, and that safeguards in the reactor are limited.

He said Israel puts atomic waste from this and other reactors in the Negev desert, the Mediterranean, and elsewhere, a measure that threatens the entire region with nuclear radiation, which destroys both man and the environment.

Hamid emphasized that Arab League continues to support President Mubarak's call to rid the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction. He called for opening up the Dimona reactor to international inspection agencies, especially the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Arrives in Saudi Arabia for Talks on 'Siege'

JN0704145896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement on arrival in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, at noon today, President Yasir 'Arafat said that his visit aims to brief Saudi King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz and Saudi officials on the difficult situation the Palestinian people are experiencing as a result of Israel's collective punishment policy.

President 'Arafat added that he will request Saudi help in lifting the military siege imposed on Palestine. He will also request support for the Palestinian people, so that they can bypass the current difficult situation.

President 'Arafat's visit to Saudi Arabia will last two days. He will hold talks with King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz and Saudi officials on the recent political developments in the region and ways to enhance Arab solidarity.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Adviser Denies Reports on Mediation With Hamas

JN0604152596 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Commenting on reports about mediation between the National Authority and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, adviser to President Yasir 'Arafat, said the authority has not assigned anyone to carry out a dialogue with Hamas.

He said within the framework of preparations for convening the Palestine National Council, the National Authority and the PLO are holding talks with the PLO factions. Abu-Rudaynah emphasized that the PLO urges all forces and factions in the Palestinian arena, as well as the Palestinian people, to preserve Palestinian achievements and gains.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Says Reports on Dialogue With Hamas 'Baseless'

JN0604160996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1118 GMT 6 Apr 96

[Report by Khalil Abu-'Arab in Nabulus; from the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Yasir 'Arafat left Nabulus for Gaza after a three-day visit to the governorate during which he met with a large number of representatives of national, popular, and women's organizations in the area.

Before he left Nabulus, the president announced the opening of the Palestinian Financial Market in Nabulus Governorate. He said this is an achievement and a point of pride for the Palestinian economy.

This morning, his excellency visited the Health Ministry and the Nabulus Municipality. During this visit, the president praised the role of the municipality and the Health Ministry in serving Palestinian society. The president asked the Local Government Ministry to apply the pioneer experience of the Nabulus Municipality in all municipalities in the Palestinian governorates. The president said Palestinians should be proud of the Nabulus Municipality.

Presidency Secretary General al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim said that the Council of Ministers, which held its weekly session in Nabulus Governorate, emphasized the importance of following its plan to increase job opportunities for workers who are harmed by the siege imposed by the occupation authorities on our Palestinian people.

[Begin 'Abd-al-Rahim recording] The Council of Ministers reiterated the importance of following the council's plan to increase job opportunities for workers harmed by unemployment caused by the recent acts of violence. The brother president presented a detailed report on this subject, noting the agreement reached with the president of the World Bank to find jobs for 20,000 workers in the Palestinian governorates in the West Bank and Gaza, in cooperation with the Ministries of Finance, Labor, and Local Government, and PECDAR [the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction]. The president noted that there is a plan to find jobs for another 20,000 persons during this month. During the next three months, jobs will be created for 50,000 workers. The president added that the Palestinian Authority has obtained a $15 million loan from local banks for this purpose.

The president briefed the council on the details of what we will present to the conference of donor states, which will meet in Brussels on 12 April to study the pressing needs of the Palestinian people. Dr. Nabil Sha'th will lead our delegation to this conference.

The president will visit Saudi Arabia on 7 April to explain to the Saudi brothers the suffering that has resulted from the Israeli siege imposed on our Palestinian people.

The president expressed hope that this visit will produce important results and the brothers in Saudi Arabia will help our people at this critical time. His excellency the president's visit to the United Arab Emirates produced good results.

The council of ministers also held a lengthy discussion on the situation in the Palestinian arena. In this regard, the brother president called for opening dialogue immediately with the factions and forces affiliated with the PLO to brief them on the developments in light of the return of many leaders of these factions and forces to the homeland.

The president reaffirmed that dialogue with our brothers in the PLO factions — particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Arab Liberation Front — is at the top of our priorities. The president said: We are not thinking about holding any other dialogues. The claims about holding dialogue with Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad are completely baseless. We did not send a delegation to them and we are not thinking about sending a delegation to hold dialogue with them, particularly Hamas. The newspaper reports, which have been repeated by a Hamas leader in Amman, are baseless. They are not going to change their decision. [end recording]

The president reaffirmed that the Hamas Movement has opened a dialogue with the other party through Rabbi Hayim [name indistinct] and that the Hamas leadership abroad decided to open this dialogue. The president added: Regrettably, there are Arab parties who are pushing the Hamas Movement to carry out acts to weaken the National Authority. The president praised the ruling issued by His Eminence Shaykh Sayyid Tantawi, al-Azhar grand imam, who denounced the suicide operations and said that these operations do not belong in Islam. The Council of Ministers unanimously approved the wise policy of facing those who tamper with the potential and goals of the Palestinian people. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Legislative Council Member on Dialogue With Hamas

JN0604181996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1124 GMT 6 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Marwan al-Barghuthi, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, by correspondent Daniella Karim Khalaf; place and date not given; from the "Today's Events" program — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Khalaf] A Palestinian delegation is currently working to promote dialogue between the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], as manifested by the meeting that will be held in Amman within the next two days. We are speaking with Marwan al-Barghuthi, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, about the mission of the delegation, which is expected to leave for Amman tomorrow or the next day.

[Al-Barghuthi] Two weeks ago, several nationalist and Islamic figures addressed a memorandum to the public and all political forces. This memorandum contained seven basic points that we believe can serve as a basis for dialogue among all the political forces in our country. This dialogue must aim to defuse tension under the terrorist Israeli blockade of our people, ease our people's suffering, avert any aggravation of this suffering through domestic tension and problems that our people cannot afford to have, and prevent friction among the various sides. The memorandum was welcomed by the Fatah Movement; by several Palestinian political factions, such as the Palestinian People's Party; by independent nationalist figures; by most members of the Legislative Council; and by some Islamic figures.

We found that there is an opportunity to complete the dialogue. We met with brother President Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] during his visit to Ramallah and al-Birah Governorate. We discussed this issue with him. The whole picture became clear. Brother President Abu-'Ammar believes that continuing the dialogue among various Palestinian political forces is necessary to protect and safeguard Palestinian national unity. As you must know, the dialogue must be based on certain parameters that we believe are necessary if this dialogue is to be successful and straightforward. This dialogue must produce commitments that will be honored by various parties. We do not believe that this dialogue will involve only Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The dialogue must involve the various Palestinian political forces. It will be held under the auspices of the Palestinian National Authority.

[Khalaf] Given this memorandum and the agenda for the dialogue sessions in Jordan, can we say that the Jordan dialogue sessions will be a continuation of the Cairo dialogue sessions held before the Palestinian legislative elections?

[Al-Barghuthi] That is true. I believe these sessions will be deeper. The Palestinian National Authority is not actually a party to the dialogue. It is the representative of the Palestinian people. It is the national entity of the Palestinian people. Hence, the dialogue sessions will be held under its auspices. We think that Palestinian nationalist figures that represent various colors in the political spectrum must be involved in any dialogue sessions. It is important for representatives of political forces to take part in these sessions. The dialogue sessions should not be confined to certain parties. It is crucial that various parties serve as witnesses to the dialogue sessions. They should follow up these sessions, encourage them, and play a positive role in attaining the desired results.

Given the recent incidents, the bombings, the blockade, and the dilemma being experienced by the Palestinian people, we must find a way to safeguard Palestinian national unity, consummate our march, and consecrate the premise that the Palestinian National Authority is the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The visit to Amman and anywhere else.... [sentence as heard]

[Khalaf, interrupting] When will it be? Tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow?

[Al-Barghuthi] The meeting will probably be tomorrow. Some arrangements have been made, and some contacts have been held to make the visit tomorrow. We hope that we will succeed. The goal is to meet with Hamas leaders and brief them on the situation, submit the memorandum to them, and listen carefully to their views.

[Khalaf] Will the Hamas delegation to the dialogue sessions consist of Hamas officials in the Palestinian territories?

[Al-Barghuthi] No. The dialogue will be held with Hamas leaders outside the territories. The delegation that will leave for the meetings consists of people who took the lead in drafting the memorandum, which is the catalyst for this dialogue. They drew up the basis for this dialogue. We would like to listen to the brothers' views and to know where they stand on this issue.

[Khalaf] Several calls have been made by Hamas leaders, led by Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, urging national dialogue and national unity. Have you seen a favorable response by Hamas to these calls?

[Al-Barghuthi] The remarks by the mujahid Shaykh Ahmad Yasin are encouraging. We hope that the brother Hamas leaders will heed these remarks. Similar remarks were made by several other Islamic figures whom we met in detention centers. We visited many Islamic figures in jail. We believe they have a positive attitude and support dialogue. They asked us to relay several messages that we believe must be communicated. The aim is to hold dialogue sessions and promote national unity.

[Khalaf] Will you participate in the dialogue as a member of the Legislative Council or as a member of the Fatah Movement's Revolutionary Council?

[Al-Barghuthi] As a matter of fact, the committee that drafted the memorandum does not representative the factions. The people who will be involved in the dialogue sessions, such as Brother Faysal al-Husayni; Jamil Hamami, a leading Islamic figure; Dr. Riyad al-Maliki; and others, are all members of one faction or another. We are participating in this endeavor to safeguard and protect Palestinian national unity.

The Fatah Movement has spelled out its views and attitude toward dialogue. The Palestinian Legislative Council unanimously advocated a democratic national dialogue. The Fatah Movement called for this dialogue and made its position in this regard clear. It also spelled out the principles that must constitute the bedrock of this dialogue. Based on this position and the desire to safeguard national unity, we are making our moves.

[Khalaf] Thank you, Marwan al-Barghuthi.

[Al-Barghuthi] Thanks.

Palestinian Affairs: Cabinet Declares Opposition to Hamas Dialogue

JN0604202296 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1810 GMT 6 Apr 96

["Text" of statement issued by the Palestinian Council of Ministers in Nabulus on 6 April—read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Council of Ministers held its weekly meeting under President Yasir 'Arafat in Nabulus. The meeting lasted until dawn today.

Presidency Secretary General al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim said the Council of Ministers emphasized the importance of implementing the council's plan to provide jobs for unemployed workers. The recent acts of violence are a major cause of this unemployment.

'Abd-al-Rahim added that the president presented a detailed report on this subject, noting the agreement reached with the World Bank president to find jobs for 20,000 workers in the Palestinian governorates in the West Bank and Gaza, in cooperation with the Ministries of Finance, Labor, and Local Government, and PECDAR [Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction]. The president noted plans to find jobs for another 20,000 workers this month. Over the next three months, jobs will be created for 50,000 workers. The president added that the National Authority obtained a $15 million loan from local banks for this purpose.

The president briefed the council on the details of our presentation to the donor states' conference that will meet in Brussels on 12 April to study the pressing needs of the Palestinian people. Dr. Nabil Sha'th will lead our delegation to the conference.

The presidency secretary general said that the president will visit Saudi Arabia tomorrow to extend his congratulations on the full recovery of the custodian of the two holy mosques and his resumption of duty, as well as to discuss Arab solidarity and explain to our Saudi brothers the suffering that has resulted from the Israeli siege against our people.

'Abd-al-Rahim said: We hope that this visit will produce important results, as has always been the case with our brothers in Saudi Arabia, and that it will help end our people's suffering at this critical time, just as his excellency's visit to the United Arab Emirates and his meeting with his brother Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan produced good results.

The presidency secretary general said that, in addition to these priorities in the government's plan of action, the Council of Ministers held a lengthy discussion on the Palestinian political situation. The brother president called for opening dialogue immediately with the opposition factions and forces affiliated with the PLO to brief them on the developments in light of the return of many leaders of these factions and forces to the homeland.

The president asserted that dialogue with our brothers in the PLO factions — particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Arab Liberation Front — is at the top of our priorities. The president said: We are not thinking about holding other dialogues. The claims about holding dialogue with Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad are completely baseless.

We have not sent a delegation, nor are we contemplating sending a delegation for dialogue with them, especially with the Hamas Movement.

The reports by some newspapers and the statements by some Amman-based Hamas leaders are baseless. We are confident that they will not change their decisions, which were not theirs in the first place. Nevertheless, the National Authority welcomes the announcement by any party renouncing violence, expressing respect for the National Authority in its capacity as the sole authority in the homeland, indicating willingness to comply with the authority's laws and commitments at all levels, and respecting the democratic choice of our people.

His excellency the president said: Hamas has repeatedly tried to stage a coup against the legitimate Palestinian authority at the behest of orders from abroad. This movement's decisions are not in its own hands, but in the hands of forces that aim to kill the Palestinian dream and nip the Palestinian entity in the bud.

The Council of Ministers was unanimous in its distrust of those Islamized persons [al-muta'aslimin] who pretend to be Muslims. Their shameless acts are clearly evident in Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, and seditious Iran.

Al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim added: The Council of Ministers said it regrets the fact that there are Arab parties pushing Hamas to attempt to weaken the National Authority, scuttle its commitments, and undermine the Palestinian legitimacy. The day will come when we will expose all the incriminating evidence and documents.

'Abd-al-Rahim said: His excellency the president asserted that the attempts by the deceptive parties to upstage the revolution are old. They never cease. These parties are simply tools to implement the conspiratorial power-sharing scheme.

His excellency the president revealed that Hamas was preparing to carry out four new operations. If not for the vigilance of the Palestinian security personnel, who managed to apprehend the masterminds behind the planned attacks, these operations would have taken place. His excellency the president asked our people, the Palestinian nationalist forces, and the Palestinian security personnel to demonstrate further vigilance and attention to defend the newborn Palestinian entity, which some capitals are planning to kill to promote other options. He added: We must defend our march and our goals with firmness and strength, regardless of the price. We are defending the dream and the future of our children and that of prospective generations. We must do so to avert notorious calamities like those currently unfolding in Egypt, Afghanistan, Algeria, and elsewhere.

'Abd-al-Rahim said that the Council of Ministers commended the religious ruling by His Eminence Shaykh Sayyid Tantawi, shaykh of the al-Azhar Mosque, on suicide operations. In his ruling, Shaykh Tantawi condemned these operations as entirely un-Islamic.

'Abd-al-Rahim added that this ruling was a response to the untruthful rulings issued in some capitals that sanctioned the shedding of the blood of National Authority members and those rulings issued by some Islamized members of the Jordanian parliament, who are bent on interfering in our domestic affairs and hurting our people's higher interests.

The secretary general of the presidency noted that these hirelings are trying to force a confrontation. Consequently, we must be attentive and aware of their long-term goal of killing the newborn Palestinian entity.

In this context, the president emphasized that we should be an honest leadership that firmly confronts and strikes at conspirators in order to preserve the Palestinian dream and realize our great objective of establishing the independent Palestinian state with holy Jerusalem as its capital. At the same time, we should have enough courage to learn lessons and review our performance in a manner that strengthens the relationship between the people and the National Authority.

'Abd-al-Rahim added that the Council of Ministers unanimously approved this wise policy of confronting those who deviate from the national line, those who tamper with our people's resources, objectives, and their higher interests, and those who gamble with the democratic option.

He added the Council of Ministers then discussed the subject of establishing private Palestinian universities. It decided to hold a joint meeting led by the president and attended by concerned ministers and the Higher Educational Council to discuss the feasibility of this subject as soon as possible. The results of this meeting will then be presented to the Council of Ministers to make the appropriate decision on this subject.

The presidency secretary general said the Council of Ministers decided to send a delegation to monitor the Russian elections, in response to a Russian invitation. The council asked the president to select this delegation based on the friendship that links us with the Russian Federation and because our Russian friends sent a delegation to observe the Palestinian presidential and legislative elections.

'Abd-al-Rahim added that the Council of Ministers also decided to assign Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi to lead the delegation to the joint committee meetings with the friendly Republic of Kazakhstan to improve economic cooperation. This committee will be created during the visit by Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev to Gaza and his meeting with President 'Arafat.

'Abd-al-Rahim added that Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, head of the Palestinian delegation to Washington conference, presented a report on the follow-up conference on implementing the resolutions of the Summit of Peacemakers, at which the world countries supported the Palestinian position on changing the conference agenda. Dr. 'Urayqat said the conference agenda included the following points: 1. Supporting the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and implementing the agreements that have already been signed. 2. Supporting the current economic needs of the Palestinian people as a result of the continuation of the collective punishment against the Palestinian people. 3. Supporting peace on the other Arab tracks. 4. Confronting terrorism as a regional and international phenomenon.

Dr. 'Urayqat said the meeting participants recommended that Israel stop the collective punishment and abide by the agreements that have already been signed. The participants also decided to hold an urgent donor states's conference in Brussels on 12 April to discuss the needs of the Palestinian people.

The Council of Ministers praised the positions of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the European Union, and other Arab and foreign countries that participated in the conference. A ministerial-level meeting will be held for the participating countries later this month.

Palestinian Affairs: Official Confirms 'Secret' Settler-PA Talks

TA0704082296 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0400 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Sufyan Abu-Zayidah, "official in charge of the Israel desk at the PA," by correspondents Mikha Friedman and 'Ayana Alon; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Friedman] Do you confirm this morning's HA'ARETZ report on secret talks between settlement leaders and Palestinian Authority [PA] officials? [passage omitted]

[Abu-Zayidah] I have not yet read it, but basically I suppose I cannot deny it contains some truth.

[Alon] There are supposed to have been seven such meetings.

[Abu-Zayidah] Seven? Believe me, I did not count them.

[Friedman] Was the idea to hold the meetings brought up by the PA or the settlement leaders?

[Abu-Zayidah] I do not think either side initiated them. I believe a third element brought up and launched the idea to begin with, and the idea must have done well.

[Friedman] Did the PA representatives feel that the settlement leaders recognize the PA and view it as a legitimate interlocutor?

[Abu-Zayidah] I do not think those who attended the meetings were representing either the PA or the settlements. The representatives of both sides are obviously influential people, each in his own sphere, but I cannot say the thing had been arranged in a formal manner.

[Alon] Did the PA members tell their interlocutors that settlers would be able to continue living in their settlements?

[Abu-Zayidah] I believe this point, which took up a lot of time at the meetings, was the purpose of these talks. They addressed the question of what would happen under the permanent arrangement. I think that basically, the Palestinians will see no problem if some settlers decide to remain under full Palestinian jurisdiction, but all this is part of the permanent arrangement.

[Friedman] Did you hear those people state their willingness to live under Palestinian rule?

[Abu-Zayidah] I think that they are not unanimous on the issue, but I do believe that some of them would be willing to live under Palestinian rule.

[Friedman] Then Yosi Beilin's statement that all lands with Jewish settlements will remain under Israeli sovereignty is an overstatement, because there can be an arrangement that is both better for the PA and within Israel's red lines.

[Abu-Zayidah] What is clear is that the PA still views the settlements and the settlers as the greatest obstacle to the achievement of a permanent arrangement. I think, therefore, that Yosi Beilin, as well as the PA and the settlers, know that some solution will have to be found eventually. Some of the settlers, who are evidently wiser than others, have been trying to find out in which direction the wind is blowing.

[Alon] Does Yasir 'Arafat know about these contacts?

[Abu-Zayidah] Yes.

[Friedman] Will the talks continue?

[Abu-Zayidah] I think there have been no talks for a long time, for various reasons.

[Friedman] There have been no talks recently, then. Thank you very much, Sufyan Abu-Zayidah.

Palestinian Affairs: Official Comments on Reported Settler-Palestinian Meetings

JN0704151696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1300 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hasan 'Asfur, member of the Legislative Council and director general of the Negotiations Department, said that there are no official meetings between Palestinians and settlers.

He added that meetings are sometimes held between Palestinians and Israelis in the form of seminars and workshops in which viewpoints are presented.

'Asfur said that some settlers might have participated in these meetings which aimed to support the efforts to continue the peace process and find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question based on establishing two states for the two peoples away from violence and terrorism.

He added that such seminars and workshops are unofficial.

Palestinian Affairs: PFLP Sets Conditions for Dialogue With PA

JN0804095696 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 8 Apr 96 p 17

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus—The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP] emphasized that national dialogue among the Palestinian factions should be based on principles that secure its success.

Commenting on the call for dialogue among the PLO factions as made by Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat through Presidency Secretary General al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim, the PFLP said that excluding Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the Islamic Jihad from this dialogue means excluding one of the most important pillars for the reconstruction of the Palestinian house, especially its legislative establishment — the Palestine National Council.

The front said success in this dialogue requires an appropriate atmosphere. Dialogue requires that the Palestinian Authority [PA] stop campaigns of collective arrests and stop pursuing the strugglers and storming their houses. The PA should also release all political prisoners.

The front said the PA should thoroughly evaluate the entire PLO political process since the Madrid conference and should seriously reform its political march as a prerequisite for dialogue.

Palestinian Affairs: Al-Za'nun on Israeli 'Siege,' PNC Session

JN0604121296 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 6 Apr 96 p 38

[Interview with Salim al-Za'nun, PNC acting speaker, by correspondent Shakir al-Jawhari in Amman; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [al-Jawhari] You said on 18 March that the new Palestinian government will be formed within two weeks. Why has it not been formed yet?

[Al-Za'nun] The Dizengoff operation caused a serious dilemma for the Palestinian Command and mobilized the world against us. The Sharm al-Shaykh conference was held. President Clinton came to this conference to corner the Palestinians, given that they are unable to check terrorism. Had it not been for the stands adopted by Egyptian President Muhammad Husni Mubarak and his Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, French President Jacques Chirac, and the sympathy of some Arab countries, the conference would have been against the Palestinian National Authority and against its performance. But, the balance was redressed thanks to the huge efforts President 'Arafat and the Palestinian delegation exerted. This resulted in the issuance of balanced resolutions. In spite of this, our delegation to the meeting of the follow-up committee of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference which recently met in New York sensed that there was an inclination to go back on stands by voiding them from their contents and to return to the old tune that all operations are launched from the Gaza strip, and that is why the closure imposed on the Gaza Strip should be maintained and the collective punishment should continue.

The truth is that the entire world knows that many [Palestinians] died because the siege and closure policy prevented their being taken to hospitals. Unemployment reached serious proportions which prompted President 'Arafat to employ 5,000 workers. He also was forced to make a five percent cut to the salaries of employees although they already were suffering from inflation. He was forced to carry out such a measure to remedy the situation. Large quantities of flour were brought in from Arab countries and were distributed to needy people for free.

Prices increased, there were no markets for agricultural products as export to Israel was suspended following the siege. The Gaza Strip suffers from a shortage of meat. Unfortunately, the Israeli side sacrificed an entire people who are their neighbors in their attempt to stop a security threat against them from 1 percent of the Palestinian population.

[Al-Jawhari] All these circumstances which you explained should have expedited the formation of a new government that will assume its responsibilities and not delay its formation?

[Al-Za'nun] Efforts to counter this situation delayed and hampered the formation of the government. I do not consider this a delay. We had agreed to this. The decree that was issued on 16 January says that the Palestinian Authority head should form a new government within a five-week period after the Legislative Council holds its first session. This session was held on 7 March. The five-week period ends on 14 April. In no case whatsoever, should the formation of a government take place beyond that date. [passage omitted]

[Al-Jawhari] What about the measures taken to enable Nayif Hawatimah [secretary general of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine] to enter Palestinian territories?

[Al-Za'nun] President 'Arafat is personally handling this issue. He pursues it with the relevant quarters?

[Al-Jawhari] What is the situation?

[Al-Za'nun] There is no reply yet from the Israeli side.

[Al-Jawhari] A bylaw is being prepared for the Palestinian Legislative Council, which is part of the Palestine National Council [PNC]. How can one council have two bodies and two bylaws as well?

[Al-Za'nun] In fact, the brothers at the Legislative Council's legal committee got their inspiration for the proposed bylaw from the PNC bylaws. For example, the Speaker's Office consists of a speaker, two deputy speakers, and a secretary. It was decided to form the Legislative Council's office in the same way.

From the beginning, Israel imposed on us a national and legislative council. Israel also imposed that our cause should have an interim and final stage. If the 6.5 million Palestinians had been allowed to participate in the elections held in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, they would have chosen one council. However, the Israelis insistence that the Legislative Council should only represent 2.4 million of the Palestinians makes us adhere to the presence of the PNC, which represents 6.5 million Palestinians spread out in more than 80 countries.

[Al-Jawhari] Did you set a date for a PNC meeting?

[Al-Za'nun] We are ready to hold a PNC meeting before 7 May. In other words, we will not break the promise we agreed on and that is, to hold a PNC meeting two months after the Legislative Council begins its meetings. However, this obligation was stipulated in the Oslo 2 agreement, which includes reciprocal obligations that the two parties should implement as one deal.

If the PNC should meet to amend the PLO Charter, then the Israelis at least should implement whatever is stipulated in the Oslo 2 agreement. The Oslo 2 agreement stipulates the release of Palestinian prisoners, something which has not taken place. It also stipulates withdrawal from Hebron, and Israel now is announcing that it will delay its withdrawal from there. The Oslo 2 agreement stipulates that 30 percent of the West Bank territories are to be returned to us. However, Israel is now back to occupying 27 percent of the West Bank territories, leaving us with the populated areas and cities only that have a total area between 3 and 5 percent. There is a reoccupation and going back on implementing the Oslo 2 agreement on the ground.

Therefore, I repeat that dismembering the West Bank, besieging cities, and isolating Ramallah, for example, from its villages — just as in the case of Nabulus — as well as the measures in Bethlehem are an encroachment on Palestinian sovereignty over the territories, withdrawal from which was stipulated by the Oslo 2 agreement. All this is taking place instead of completing withdrawal from the remaining 70 percent of the West Bank territories.

I believe that the PNC should convene because this is the way it should have been from the beginning. It would be unusual if the PNC did not meet. However, if the PNC convenes under the current circumstances, it will discuss the above issues and retractions. It will also discuss the fact that Peres is not the one who is ruling Israel today and that after the Dizengoff operation, he left things in the hands of the military, who do not want to live up to the Oslo obligations. Hence, if the PNC convenes now, its discussions may not include the issue of amending the PLO Charter. Even if it does discuss this issue, the PNC members may unanimously refuse to amend it. [passage omitted]

[Al-Jawhari] Which territories have been reoccupied?

[Al-Za'nun] All territories within Area B have been reoccupied. We are only left with cities and populated areas within Area A, which constitutes an economic burden on the Palestinian Authority. The territories within Area B include 465 villages. Because of the policy of dismembering the Palestinian territories, the Health Ministry's undersecretary, who lives in Ramallah, cannot report to work in Nabulus even though he carries a VIP card. [passage ommitted]

Palestinian Affairs: More on Hamas Military Wing's Terms for Talks With PA

TA0504151896 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 1320 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The military leadership of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military branch of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] Movement, issued a leaflet today with conditions for starting a dialogue with the PA [Palestinian Authority]. The Brigades were responding to the recent initiative of national and Islamist figures to go to Jordan tomorrow for meeting with Hamas leaders there. The figures reportedly are Jamil Hamami, Riyad al- Maliki, Marwan al-Barghuthi, and 'Imad al-Faluji. Following are excerpts of the leaflet:

Al-Qassam Brigades utterly rejects, and will not agree in any manner, to conduct any dialogue whatsoever with 'Arafat's authority unless the following conditions are implemented:

1. To totally end all terrorist measures practices by the authority against Hamas and al-Qassam (...)

2. Release of all Islamic Movement detainees from the Authority's prisons with no exceptions.

3. To try all the persecutors responsible for torturing Hamas and al-Qassam heroes in authority jails and interrogation cells (...)

4. Authority President ('Arafat) has to read an official statement in a press conference including an official apology for all the terrorist measures and ugly crimes committed by the Authority's henchmen against the Islamic Movement's members.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Palestine Liberation Army' Chief Submits Resignation

NC0504162696 Paris AFP in English
1543 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman, April 5 (AFP)—The commander of Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) troops in Jordan has sent his resignation to Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat, a Palestinian source said here Friday [5 April].

"Brigadier Muhammad Qudsiyah has sent a written resignation to 'Arafat, but we don't whether 'Arafat accepted it," the source told AFP, asking not to be identified.

He said 'Arafat has summoned the second in command of the PLA contingent in Jordan, Colonel Faysal al-Fahum, "for an audience in the self-rule areas within 24 hours."

In May 1994, 700 members of the contingent left Amman to join the Palestinian Authority (PA) police in the self-rule areas, leaving behind some 2,300 poorly-equipped troops.

Disgruntled with his troops being neglected, Qudsiyah approached King Husayn who pledged to pay the monthly salaries of the contingent while they are stationed in Jordan.

Since August 1994, PLA troops in Jordan have been on the Jordanian army's pay role, after the PA failed to pay for two months. 'Arafat is the commander in chief of the PLA, whose forces are dispersed in several Arab states.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Asks Egypt To 'Intercede' With Israel on Blockade

NC0704070096 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic
0600 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat has praised President Husni Mubarak's stance on the Palestinian issue. He also thanked President Mubarak for his efforts in convening the Sharm al-Shaykh Summit. He said that the high-level delegations that attended the summit are a testimony to Egypt's important status.

In an interview with our radio last night, President 'Arafat noted that he has asked Egypt to intercede with Israel to lift the blockade [hisar] on the Palestinian people and to supply them with basic foodstuffs.

President 'Arafat asserted that the blockade is a violation of the agreements signed in Washington and Cairo. This blockade is tantamount to a collective punishment of the Palestinian people. He warned that the situation in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Bethlehem harms the peace process, not only on the Palestinian track, but on other tracks as well.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Protests Jordanian Media Criticism of PA

TA0704104196 Jerusalem AL-NAHAR in Arabic
3 Apr 96 pp 1, 7

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, QUDS PRESS — Reliably informed Palestinian sources said that President Yasir 'Arafat recently expressed disappointment at the fact that some unofficial Jordanian media have leveled criticism at the Palestinian Authority [PA] and its performance in the political sphere. The media also criticized the PA's human rights record.

The sources told QUDS PRESS that President 'Arafat recently sent a message to Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti about articles published in some Jordanian weekly papers. He said that the articles incite people against the PA and call on Palestinians to oppose it. 'Arafat noted that the growth of this phenomenon will have a negative effect on relations between the two sides. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Foils 'Arafat's Plan To Undermine Ties to Jordan

JN0804100296 Amman AL-MAJD in Arabic
8 Apr 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] AL-MAJD can confirm that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] foiled, during the past two days, a scheme concocted by Yasir 'Arafat and his aides to drive a political wedge between Jordan and Hamas, as well as to undermine the fragile relationship between the two sides.

This attempt by 'Arafat is represented by encouraging a ranking Palestinian delegation — which comprises Faysal al-Husayni, Marwan al-Barghuthi, Riyad al-Maliki, Mahdi 'Abd-al-Hadi, 'Imad al-Faluji, Jamil Hamami, and Mahmud al-Ramahi — to head directly for Amman to embark on mediation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. This exposed and malicious attempt by 'Arafat aimed at showing that the real Hamas leadership, which is in control of everything, exists in Jordan.

Hamas leaders in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the rest of the Arab homeland, became aware of 'Arafat's game. The Hamas leaders charged Hamas Official Spokesman Ibrahim Ghawshah with issuing an urgent press statement last Friday [5 April], rejecting mediation with the 'Arafat authority, but showing respect for the members of the mediation team themselves. This is because the mediation team consists of respected Palestinian figures with whom Hamas believes it is not in its interest to anger or differ.

As the Hamas leadership had expected, Ibrahim Ghawshah's statement exposed 'Arafat's trap and its objectives. This was obvious when PA Secretary al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim said that the PA did not intend to accept dialogue or mediation with Hamas. Consequently, the mediation team did not travel to Jordan and held the 'Arafat authority, not Hamas, responsible for this. And this was exactly what Hamas wanted.

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Dissident on Oslo Pact, Suicide Attacks

NC0604163796 Beirut AL-DIYAR in Arabic 21 Mar 96 p 9

[Interview with Colonel Munir al-Maqdah, former Fatah official and "leader of the Fatah Movement for the Liberation of All Palestine," in the 'Ayn al-Hulwah camp, Sidon, by Hala Biraq and May Abu-Fadil; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [AL-DIYAR] What is the situation of the Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine after the Oslo agreement?

[Al-Maqdah] The Palestinian people are suffering a major tragedy. People are dying of hunger and poverty and of mental torture in 'Arafat's jails. Perhaps the people enjoyed greater freedom under Israeli occupation. There were areas where the Jews could not enter. Now the Jews use the Palestinians against one another instead of using Jewish soldiers. The occupation is still there and 4 million Palestinians in the diaspora have been refused their right to return since the Oslo agreement. The Palestinians suffer most in Lebanon. There are 60 job categories the Palestinians are not allowed to work in. Kindergartens, high schools, and hospitals have been closed. There is 50 percent unemployment and the UNRWA has reduced its services by 70 percent.

All this suffering is due to the fact that we are without a homeland. If we had a homeland we would not have come here. No one in all the Arab countries now mentions the Palestinian people's problems. Syria alone continues to raise the issue of a fair and comprehensive peace and the resolutions calling for the right of the Palestinian people to return home. The rest of the Arab homeland has capitulated. Thus, the more pressure there is on us, the more human bombs there are inside and outside Palestine. We will continue to carry out suicide operations until the Jewish terrorists who usurped our land and people are removed. Ever since we were forced off of our land, we have been carrying suicide operations. The failed Oslo agreement gave us determination to complete training and resist the enemy in this way. We have many volunteers; they come by the dozen to carry out suicide operations inside our usurped land. A large number of these are now in Gaza and others are on their way.

[AL-DIYAR] Is there any truth behind reports of the formation of a suicide unit to act against the Zionist enemy?

[Al-Maqdah] This is not the first or last such group. In 1995 we had 80 combatants graduate and a week ago we graduated 40. After the Oslo Agreement we pledged to our Palestinian people that we would continue the resistance against the occupation with all available means, even if we had to use human bombs against the usurpers and occupiers to foil these cursed agreements that deprive four million Palestinians of the right to return to their Palestinian homeland. The situation since the Oslo agreements is worse than before them because they made 'Arafat and his henchmen the executioners of our people.

[AL-DIYAR] Some people say that the Sharm al-Shaykh summit is aimed at boosting peace. Are you going to war at a time when all others have forsworn war?

[Al-Maqdah] That summit was aimed at supporting terrorism and consolidating the occupation. Where was this summit when Lebanon was destroyed from south to north in 1982? Where were the participants of this summit when the al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre occurred or when the south [Lebanon] was destroyed by air raids and shelling day and night for seven days in 1993, resulting in hundreds of thousands displaced? Why is the occupation not condemned? Why do the occupiers refuse to withdraw from the occupied Arab land in the Golan, south Lebanon, and Palestine? We will continue our resistance despite these circumstances, and we emphasize that there will be no peace in the region until the occupation of all occupied Arab territories is ended.

[AL-DIYAR] Why was the formation of this unit announced at this time, when the Sharm al-Shaykh summit is calling for combating terrorism?

[Al-Maqdah] If they are calling resistance terrorism, let them do so; all the Palestinian people are terrorists.

[AL-DIYAR] Are their religious fatwas that legitimize suicide operations even though some religions ban suicide and consider it to be a sin?

[Al-Maqdah] Islam's four creeds are clear on suicide operations when Muslim land is occupied. Our Islamic shari'ah permits it in this case. When a suicide fighter kills 20 or 30 Jews, he goes to Paradise. Martyrdom in the cause of God is in line with the shari'ah, and there are several Koran verses and the Prophet Muhammad's traditions to support this. I do not believe that anyone has issued fatwas banning martyrdom in our time. A Muslim woman can go on jihad without her husband's permission. Every Muslim everywhere, even in the United States, must take part in a jihad to regain his land. It is a sacred right for a Muslim to kill anyone who refuses to say there is no God but God and who occupies Muslim land. This applies to our usurped Palestinian land. Fighting is a duty. Every time a fighter is martyred while killing Jews, he stirs the emotions of the nation. Palestine must not be made the legal land of Jews. A human bomb is like a nuclear bomb. This is the quickest way to eliminate of the Jews. The Israelis will have to bear the consequences for any reprisals against civilians. We can retaliate from south Lebanon and from inside Palestine.

[AL-DIYAR] Some say that by announcing a suicide group at this particular time you are giving the enemy an excuse to strike at you. Do you not think so?

[Al-Maqdah] The enemy's threats against the resistance continue, both inside and outside Palestine. There are threats against Arab and Islamic states. It is natural for us to resist the occupation. We have chosen this path. It is our only advantage, so let it be dedicated to God and the homeland.

[AL-DIYAR] Is there coordination between you and Hamas' [Islamic Resistance Movement] suicide bombers? Will you send the elements you trained to the occupied territories?

[Al-Maqdah] Coordination exists among all 10 [Palestinian] factions. We train them and dispatch them to all states, especially Palestine. The Israeli response will be the same, in south Lebanon or inside Palestine.

[AL-DIYAR] Do the families of the trainees normally agree to give you their sons to carry out suicide operations?

[Al-Maqdah] The families are normally cognizant of any military actions we carry out. Some approve of sending their sons on suicide missions and some do not know about it. But ultimately when the suicide operation takes place, the families accept congratulations, not condolences.

[AL-DIYAR] Do you not believe that the tight security measures adopted by the enemy will prevent you from carrying out suicide operations, particularly after the recent acts on buses?

[Al-Maqdah] The latest operation in Tel Aviv took place in a crowded area and had the same results despite the explosive-detecting machines that they talk about and which in our military terminology we call false machines. They will not be able to seize a mujahid who wants to die. They know that if one is arrested, he will blow himself up. The maximum penalty is execution, but a mujahid goes on a mission to die. The tragedy which our Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine are going through, in terms of displacement, denial of their basic human rights, and expulsion from their homeland, will not end and they will not gain their rights without the shedding of blood, which will bring freedom.

[AL-DIYAR] Palestinian homes are being stormed and hundreds of youths are being detained. What about that?

[Al-Maqdah] How many will they detain? A million people? If so 1 or 2 million will remain to struggle. In addition, they detain youths who have nothing to do with the operations and who have no ties to us.

[AL-DIYAR] How old are the people being trained for suicide operations?

[Al-Maqdah] Between 15 and 22. They are prepared, mobilized, and given instruction about their Palestinian cause. After that, they receive military training. They are absolutely convinced of the action they are about to carry out.

[AL-DIYAR] Do not you believe that what you are doing will increase the worldwide resentment of the Palestinians and will pin the charge of terrorism on them?

[Al-Maqdah] Things cannot get any worse than they already are. What about the blockade of the Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine which lead to such actions, and the torture of Palestinian people? Is not this called terrorism?

Palestinian Affairs: Islamic Jihad Urges Increase in 'Martyrdom Operations'

JN0604143896 (Clandestine) Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic 1330 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine urged our people's masses to quit their jobs within the offices of the 'Arafat authority so that they can spare themselves the eventuality of becoming tools of oppression.

In a statement, the Islamic Jihad emphasized its adherence to the path of jihad and martyrdom regardless of how monstrous the conspiracies are and no matter what.

In its statement, the Islamic Jihad pointed out that the 'Arafat authority played the role of an honest protector of the usurper Zionist entity's security. Therefore, it is no wonder that this authority opened fire on worshipers at the Palestine Mosque. No wonder it stormed the al-Najah National University, and no wonder Palestinian blood was shed by policemen manning this authority's checkpoints.

In its statement, the Islamic Jihad saluted all the forces working to eliminate and dismember the Zionist entity. It also called for increasing martyrdom operations against the Zionist enemy.

Palestinian Affairs: Poll Shows Majority Oppose Armed Attacks Against Israel

TA0504140796 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Nabulus-based Center for Palestine Research and Studies has conducted an opinion poll in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The poll indicates that 70 percent of the respondents oppose armed attacks against Israel, 89 percent support the cessation of mutual violence between Palestinians and Israelis, and 32 percent oppose the Palestinian Authority's measures to prevent armed attacks while 59 percent support those measures.

Our correspondent Fayiz 'Umar reports that the poll showed that 78 percent of the respondents support the continuation of negotiations and that 75 percent believe that armed attacks might hinder the peace process.

Algeria

Algeria: Zeroual Receives 2 Former Officials as Dialogue Begins

LD0604143696 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Among the highlights of today's events is the beginning of the national dialogue that was called for by the presidency to deepen pluralism and strengthen the democratic process in the country.

Within the framework of this round of talks, President of the Republic Liamine Zeroual received separately Ali Haroun and Tidjani Haddam [former members of the Higher State Council] this morning at the presidential palace.

Algeria: Political Leaders Make Statements After Meeting Zeroual

LD0604181496 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In the framework of the invitation sent on 30 March to national personalities and leaders of political parties and national organizations in order to discuss and promote the national dialogue, President Liamine Zeroual this morning received Ali Haroun and Tidjani Haddam [former members of the Higher State Council]. This was announced today in a statement issued by the Presidency of the Republic.

After he was received by the president, Haroun said that he discussed with Zeroual issues related to security as well as economic, political, and social issues.

Haroun also indicated that during the meeting, other points were discussed, such as the one related to the review of the law concerning the political parties law, the elections law, and the information law. He indicated also that talks focused on the possible agreement on the dialogue's agenda to set up a joint agreement on the next legislative elections date. On his part, Haddam, in a statement to the national press following his audience with the president, expressed his hope that all sides would contribute to getting the country out of the crisis. Haddam said that he was feeling that the commitment to the promises made by the president regarding the elections would be met step by step, because as he said: We found that the president was fully ready to face up the challenges the country was expecting in the various economic, financial, and cultural fields.

Algeria: FIS Says Leader's Property To Be Confiscated

LD0604221296 Paris Radio France International in French 2130 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] According to the [Algerian] FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] abroad, the Algerian Army has ordered the police to confiscate the property of Rabah Kebir, the chairman of the disbanded movement's executive body abroad. This communique [from the FIS] condemns — I quote — a new step in provocation. Rabah Kebir is living in Germany, where he has held the right of asylum for a little over two years.

Algeria: Finance Minister Reviews 1994-95 Economic Performance

LD0604214496 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Ministry of Finance today organized a news conference given by Finance Minister Ahmed Benbitour, who assessed Algeria's financial and economic activity during 1994 and 1995. Ferida Larbi reports:

[Larbi] The Ministry of Finance organized a news conference today, attended by a large number of journalists, with the aim of giving sufficient information about the financial and economic activity in Algeria in 1994 and 1995. Finance Minister Benbitour gave a brief account at the beginning of the conference on the financial condition in Algeria during 1994 and 1995.

He affirmed that 1994 started with a number of problems that had a negative effect on the treasury, including the drop in the price of a barrel of oil and the decline in the national exports' revenues.

He added by saying that the 1994 rescheduling process caused a $1 billion drop in exports and a $1 Billion increase in imports. According to the minister's confirmation, this allowed for an increase in the value of financing the national economy during 1995, where a significant imbalance in the state's budget was recorded this year.

During this conference, Mr. Benbitour answered the journalists' various concerns and questions that, in the main, fell within the framework of the process of rescheduling Algeria's foreign debts, which Algeria had initiated about two years ago. Concerning this question, the minister answered by saying that: Within this process, Algeria has managed to pay its foreign debts and achieve a significant economic growth.

Regarding a question about whether the ministry was strategic in developing national exports outside hydrocarbons, the minister answered by saying that: Export has different conditions, the most important of which is the good quality of the product that is accepted internationally. Thus, Algeria endeavors to increase its exports within this framework.

Concerning the role of the economic growth, achieved by Algeria in the past year, in covering Algeria's foreign debts, the minister said:

[Begin Benbitour recording] In 1995 we reached an actual growth rate in excess of four percent. This means a positive growth per capita. We have not obtained such a positive growth per capita for 10 years. In consequence, the results of the growth were very positive. Concerning the covering of foreign debts, this is attributed to the balance of payments and export. We have exported goods in excess of $1 billion in 1995, more than we had exported in 1994. All this increase went to the production sector, $400 million went to the raw and semi-manufactured materials of the production sector, and $542 million went to the industrial consumer materials. [end recording]

[Larbi] Concerning a question about whether there is a possibility of using the rescheduling process for the third time in Algeria, the minister answered by saying:

[Begin Benbitour recording] This is completely untrue, because when we embarked on the rescheduling process we did that for the debts due over four years. We are still in the second year of the four year period. Consequently, there is no interpretation of this nature. There were some rumors, probably by people who did not want any good to befall this country. [end recording]

Algeria: Minister Discusses Future Oil Production Figures

LD0604221596 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] As mentioned yesterday in our report, Ammar Makhloufi, industry and energy minister and current president of OPEC, stressed that the establishment of a new strategy for the oil organization, the respect of the production quotas, and the protection of the levels of prices in the current oil market would be the issues discussed during his tour of some member countries of the organization. [passage omitted]. In an interview to the daily EL-MOUDJAHID, Makhloufi said that the recent agreements signed between SONATRACH, [national Algerian oil and gas company], and some of the biggest oil companies in the world would allow Algeria to increase the current level of production estimated at 35 million tons to 50 million tons by the year 2000.

Algeria: Electricity, Fuel, Natural Gas Prices To Increase Soon

LD0604200196 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prices of electricity, fuel, and natural gas will go up soon. This came in a statement by Ammar Makhloufi, industry and mines minister, to the daily EL-MOUDJAHID. According to Makhloufi, these increases in gas, fuel, and electricity are being made to offset the deficit of the distribution companies, struggle against waste, and make citizens participate in the investment effort the energy sector had started. According to the same source, in the next three months SONELGAS [electricity and gas company] will increase the price of natural gas and electricity from five to seven percent, in accordance with consumption rate. SONELGAS will also invest some $5 billion in the next few years in order to improve the distribution network and increase production capacities.

Algeria: World Bank To Offer $400 Million Loan

LD0704132496 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0800 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The director of the Arab Maghreb department at the World Bank said that a new situation has come to light in Algeria, and considered this situation to be sufficient for pushing the economic reforms forward.

The official at the World Bank pointed out in a press interview that the presidential elections, which will be followed by legislative elections, have imposed a new reality after ten years of negative development and tension. He added that the World Bank would offer Algeria a financial loan this year to the value of $400 million, one part of which will be devoted for financing the economy's structural reform program, and the second part will be devoted for consolidating the privatization program and achieving its goals.

Algeria: 6 Killed by Armed Group in Kabylie

LD0704161696 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Violence in Algeria was mentioned a few moments ago — as you heard in his prayer — by John Paul II [in first item of bulletin]. Well, this violence is still in the news. Six people were in fact killed by an armed group in Kabylie in a bar in Tizi Ouzou last Friday night [5 April]. The news was reported today by the Algiers daily newspaper LA TRIBUNE.

Algeria: Armed Group Fires on Motorists; Deaths Reported

LD0804093996 Paris France-2 Teletext in French 0837 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An armed group fired on motorists on the morning of 7 April on the road between Algiers and Medea, causing "deaths and numerous injuries," the daily newspaper LA TRIBUNE has reported today.

One of the motorists was the general manager of the pharmaceutical company Saidal, who must have been the gunmen's target.

It is not known if the group was captured.

The army is searching the region of Medea (south-west of Algiers), where seven French monks were kidnapped on 27 March.

Egypt

Egypt: French President Chirac Arrives for 3-Day Visit

NC0604155996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1455 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—French President Jacques Chirac and the delegation accompanying him arrived in Cairo from Beirut this evening for his first official visit to Egypt. The visit is to last three days.

President Husni Mubarak headed the party that received the French president as he landed at Cairo Airport. The reception party included ministers and senior state officials.

During his stay, Chirac will hold talks with President Husni Mubarak regarding strengthening bilateral relations.

Egypt: Mubarak, France's Chirac Begin Talks

NC0604181796 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1745 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—The Egyptian-French summit talks began in the Presidential Palace in 'Abidin this evening. President Husni Mubarak met in private with French President Jacques Chirac, who arrived in Cairo earlier this afternoon. Both presidents will discuss a number of important issues, foremost of which are strengthening Egyptian-French cooperation in all economic and political spheres, ways of achieving stability in the Middle East, and developments in the Arab-Israeli peace process. They will also discuss the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict and the problem of al-Hanish al-Kabir island.

The two presidents will follow up on certain issues that were broached during the Sharm al-Shaykh peacemakers summit, certain international and regional issues of common concern, the arrangements for the economic summit to be held in Cairo in November, and French cooperation with the Arab world and the Mediterranean countries. They will also touch on certain topics relating to the third installment on Egypt's overall debt, of which the first and second installments were written off during the Paris Club meetings.

Egypt: Mubarak, France's Chirac Hold News Conference

NC0704114696 Cairo ESC Television in Arabic 0836 GMT 7 Apr 96

[News conference by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and French President Jacques Chirac at the Presidential Palace in Heliopolis, Cairo—live; Chirac speaks in French with simultaneous Arabic translation]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Mubarak] I welcome my friend President Jacque Chirac, whom I have known for over 20 years. There is cooperation between France and Egypt. This cooperation has increased since the mid-1970s. There is cooperation in various areas, including France's support for and participation in Egypt's development plan. We greatly appreciate President Jacques Chirac, whom I have known since he was prime minister and mayor of Paris. We are proud of him. I welcome him and his delegation to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

[Chirac] Relations between France and Egypt are close and built on respect for the personality of President Mubarak. President Mubarak and I discussed international topics and the world's problems, particularly the Middle East, on which we share the same views. We also discussed Egypt's important and key role in the Mediterranean and in establishing security and stability. We discussed all regional issues.

On the bilateral level, we noted that relations between us are constantly growing. We are interested in increasing trade and cultural exchanges. Soon we will celebrate the bicentennial of the establishment of Egyptian-French relations. This celebration will take place in 1998, which will be the "Year of France" in Egypt and the "Year of Egypt" in France. In this regard, we will organize an exhibition of Alexandrian civilization for a Paris museum. Egypt will host an exhibition of modern arts, which will include works by David and Picasso.

During our talks there was concurrence of views on cultural relations. I thank President Mubarak for his hospitality. I am now prepared to answer your questions.

[Unidentified Correspondent, in French with Arabic translation] Did you discuss the chemical plant in Tarhunah [Libya] and the threats by the U.S. secretary of defense to shut [ghulq] this chemical plant?

[Chirac] We did not discuss this subject. We do not possess sufficient information on this subject. Hence, I cannot comment on this subject.

[Mubarak] This subject has been raised more than once by the United States. In my last meeting with the U.S. secretary of defense, he mentioned this subject to me. But the information is not complete. I asked him to furnish us with data and photos confirming what has been rumored. When we receive this data, we will talk to the Libyan side. We will not make any decision on this issue until we have confirmed reports. In order to avert the use of violence, we will talk to the Libyan side. Maybe we will agree with them for some European representative to go with us to see the place which is said to be used for making chemical materials.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency President Chirac, we still refer to the Radio and Television building as the Maspero Building. Maspero and five other [Frenchmen] were the first presidents of the Antiquities Department at a certain period in Egypt's history. They effectively contributed to our country's cultural progress. Will we see France continuing to play the same cultural and economic role in Egypt?

[Chirac] France's intention is to cooperate with Egypt, which is the most important cultural country in this region. Cultural cooperation between our countries, especially in the area of antiquities and history, is longstanding. The greatest Egyptian scientists are working together with the greatest French scientists. It is no coincidence that on this visit we will strengthen these relations. Our countries are linked by eternal ties and cooperation, and this must certainly grow. Egypt has enormous importance here — in archaeology, culture, drama, literature, and the plastic arts. I repeat that our cooperation will be stronger over the coming years.

[Correspondent, in French] Mr. Chirac, You have stressed that terrorism is an international phenomenon, not an Islamic one. Regarding what is happening between the Palestinians and the Israelis, is it not time that we are viewing this disease from the angle of treatment, not diagnosis?

[Chirac] Regrettably, terrorism is an international phenomenon. We find terrorists all over the world. This is a fact. President Mubarak said it, and I reiterate this view. As part of his efforts to condemn terrorists and analyze the Palestinian position, President Mubarak called the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting. In Sharm al-Shaykh, we condemned terrorism and highlighted the economic needs of the newly independent Palestinian territories. As for the peace process, Egypt and France are working together in the same spirit. That was true when I said that Resolution 425 [on Lebanon] must be implemented and that France is prepared to participate in security arrangements along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

[Correspondent] Mr. Jacques Chirac, how does France view the concept of security in the Middle East? Does France agree that Israel must receive indefinite security support?

[Chirac] France is ready to participate in all arrangements for security and stability in any country that requests our participation. France is prepared to contribute to security guarantees, I repeat.

[Correspondent, in French] What is France's position on President Mubarak's initiative to free the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction? And what is France's position on the Dimona nuclear reactor in Israel?

[Chirac] Concerning the first question, on making the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction, France supports this. As for Africa, France also supports the Egyptian initiative on destroying all weapons of mass destruction in Africa, not only in the Middle East. France supports this Egyptian position.

[Correspondent, in French] In your election campaign you raised the issue of the African forum and cooperation between the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. What are you going to do in this respect?

[Chirac] I am very interested in this idea—cooperation between Europe and the Middle East. We discussed this at the foreign ministers meeting in Barcelona with a view to reaching an agreement to support stability, cooperation, and development in the Mediterranean region. Egypt and France must cooperate in this regard; they must play a positive and pioneering role and take some initiatives. I hope that the next meeting will be at the level of the heads of state, not just foreign ministers, to strengthen European-Mediterranean cooperation.

[Correspondent, in French] France and Egypt want to expedite the peace process. Can the peace process be speeded up before the elections in Israel and the United States?

[Chirac] Every country has its own domestic political circumstances. We have to discuss this issue rather than avoid it. We must admit that the elections in the United States and Israel will play a role in the progress of the peace process. I hope that the voice of reason will prevail and that the peace process will make progress. I hope that the parties will choose coexistence, harmony, and peace and renounce hatred, war, and military confrontation. I hope that we will face the future with a sense of responsibility. I also hope that the negotiations between Israel and Syria and Lebanon will make progress.

[Mubarak] I would like to add a few words to what my friend President Chirac said. Regardless of the Israeli and U.S. elections, a long halt in negotiations would risk complications that would hinder a resumption of talks. We will hear statements from one side that there will be no evacuation from the Golan. We will also hear statements from the other side that Israel is not serious about the peace process. These statements will continue for oneupmanship and electioneering purposes. This would complicate the resumption of the negotiations once again, and the negotiations will need renewed momentum to resume. I hope that the negotiations will continue, even if there are no major results until after the Israeli elections. But postponing the negotiations until after the Israeli elections and then the U.S. elections would result in a period of freezing the peace process, which we absolutely do not wish to see.

[Correspondent Nihal Sa'd from Nile Television International] This is a question for French President Jacques Chirac. When we talk about a country as big as France, its role in the Middle East peace process, and its strong position on human rights, we wonder what role France can play to end Israel's siege and war of starvation against the Palestinians?

[Chirac] This is what we discussed. I earlier referred to the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. Like Egypt, France believes that whatever the political difficulties, the Palestinians must be given hope and must have their material needs met, such as housing, jobs, environment, services, and facilities. This is why France is the biggest aid donor to the Palestinian Authority. Europe has also decided to offer vast assistance to the Palestinians to rebuild the infrastructure and accommodate people. I came to Sharm al-Shaykh to ask the Israelis to do the same—while respecting security, of course. Nothing is more dangerous than conspiracies, attacks, and suicide or terrorist operations; they hinder all kinds of investment by the European countries. Nothing hinders this more than the terrorist operations.

[Correspondent Afkar al-Kharadli from AL-AHRAM, in French] What kind of threat does the leak from the nuclear reactor in Dimona pose? This is very serious. France and Egypt, individually and each in its respective region, have played roles to prevent these nuclear dangers.

[Chirac] I did not have the chance to discuss this subject with President Mubarak; there will be subsequent talks. All that I can say here is that if France is asked to provide technical assistance, we are ready to offer our expertise and provide whatever we can in this respect.

[Mubarak] During my visit to Damascus, we spoke about the Dimona reactor and the [radiation] leak which was reported by Israeli television and radio. We have sent experts to the border. But so far we have not detected any change in the air pollution level along the Egyptian-Israeli border. However, we are still asking: Is there really a leak or is there any danger? This is a continuous process. We are in touch with the international organizations and with Israel to reach a final decision in this regard.

[Correspondent] You said that France and Egypt have maintained close ties since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte and that both countries are preparing to celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of these ties. Can these relations still be given a fresh boost?

[Chirac] The cultural relations between Egypt and France are deep and steadily growing. In view of the importance of Egypt's cultural status, I very much hope. [sentence as received] Cairo is a fascinating city and is bustling with magnificent cultural and creative activity. Cairo is similar to New York in this respect. Cairo has amazing influence in the region. As for the political aspect, relations between French and Egyptian leaders and governments and bilateral cooperation have led to excellent results and compatible views. In this respect, I recall our views of the peace process at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. Our views were in full agreement. Regarding economic cooperation, we cannot be content with a certain level. This area is open and permits great cooperation. Economic cooperation is limitless. There is also cooperation in advanced technology and in space technology between Egypt and France. Our cooperation is fruitful and positive. Egypt is a vanguard among the countries of the south as is France among the countries of the north. We lead everyone in this area.

[Correspondent] Is France's current policy toward the Arab world temporary and tactical in order to serve France's interests, or is it a long-range strategic one? Is there a possibility for a move on the international level by France to halt the suffering of the Palestinian people?

[Chirac] I have answered a question on halting the suffering of the Palestinian people. I said that France is giving the greatest share of aid to the Palestinians and is leading Europe in this respect. We help and back the Palestinians so that they can acquire their daily needs — housing, jobs, and education. On the political level, if we want to give up confrontation and clashes, we must give these people hope for a better future. France, as we said at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, is very interested in this issue and the Palestinian aspect of the peace process. France is eager to establish positive cooperation with the Arab countries. Our policy is not tactical and ties to the Arab world are an important factor in France's foreign policy.

Egypt: Musa Comments on Egyptian-French Talks

NC0704121896 Cairo MENA in English
1135 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, April 7 (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa stressed the importance of French President Jacques Chirac's current visit to Egypt. In statements today following President Husni Mubarak's talks with President Chirac, Musa pointed out that a number of projects covering various aspects of development are discussed with the French side. The Egyptian and French delegations held talks on the sidelines of the Egyptian-French summit, he said. All topics pertaining to Egyptian-French relations are raised for discussion, he said, adding that the trade balance between the two countries is very strong and almost reaches nine billion francs. The foreign minister said that the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute could be solved either through court or politically. The matter will depend on the decision of each side, he said . Musa asserted the importance to avoid any military action, protect the ceasefire and give the French peace mediation efforts a chance. Things do not seem easy and success is not that certain, but the chances for success still exist, he said. Egypt stands firm regarding the question of Sudan and the UN Security Council, Musa said. The Egyptian stand has been repeatedly announced, he added, intimating France's support to Egypt in this regard. Musa said that cooperation between Egypt and France and joint projects to be launched in Egypt will depend on the money and available loans to be invested in these projects.

He said that the French president's talks with Egyptian officials covered those projects. The foreign minister said that his talks here today with his visiting French counterpart Herve de Charette focused on the Yemeni-Eritrean crisis over Hanish island. Discussions also covered the issue of the proposed international sanctions against Sudan, he said.

The two ministers will resume their talks later today.

Egypt: Chirac Addresses Students, Promises 'Boost' in Arab Policy

LD0804102696 Paris France-Info Radio in French
0900 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] It is the last day of Jacques Chirac's visit to Egypt. The French president has reiterated France's ambition to reinforce its Arab and Mediterranean policy — a subject which he has been expanding on since the middle of the morning to 2,000 students of Cairo University. It must be an essential dimension of French foreign policy, Jacques Chirac has said. He intends to give this Arab policy a new boost while remaining faithful to the orientation desired — according to the president — by its initiator, General Charles de Gaulle.

Chirac also expressed his wish for a lasting peace in the Middle East, which he said must involve a Palestinian state and guarantees of security for Israel:

[Begin Chirac recording] There will be no lasting peace unless the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and its legitimate aspirations to have a state are respected. Finally, lasting peace involves Israel being assured it can live in security. It is progress toward the affirmation of the Palestinian identity that will allow the definitive eradication of terrorist threats fed by isolation, bitterness, and frustration. [end recording]

Before returning to France, the head of state will give free rein to his passion for archaeology by stopping off for a few hours in Alexandria.

Egypt: Mubarak Interviewed on Relations With France, Regional Issues

NC0804073596 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2330 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Paris, 7 Apr (MENA)—The following is the text of an interview with President Husni Mubarak by the French television station Channel 3 tonight:

Question [Interviewer not identified, as received]: How do you view French policy toward the Arab area in view of President Chirac's support for the major role you and your country are playing in maintaining stability and peace in the region?

The president [as received]: We believe Egypt is the focus of the Arab world. I also believe, I know full well, that the Arab world thinks France could give assistance in the various fields, particularly concerning the Palestinians' right to their independent state and stability.

I imagine that France is best placed to understand the Arab world and to give support, which we consider vital.

Question: Mr. President, Israel recently confiscated Palestinian land. Do you think the peace process is in danger?

The president: The Israelis should not annex any Arab land. I believe the annexation of territories would harm peace and further complicate the negotiations and obstruct the achievement of a comprehensive settlement. Hence, the Israelis should not embark on anything like this, so that we do not lose confidence in the Israelis. It behooves the Israelis to adopt measures that are bound to encourage the other parties to resume the negotiations.

Question: Are you optimistic concerning the possibility of Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon?

The president: I believe Israel will withdraw from Lebanon sooner or later. There is no other way, but to pursue the road to peace and solve the problem through negotiations. There is no need to use force, because this is extremely costly and solves nothing.

Wars could simply be the movement of forces, as we did in 1973. We do not need more wars. We want to sit at the negotiating table and try to work out solutions suitable to everyone. The forces will withdraw from Lebanon when a settlement is reached among the Israelis, Syrians, and Lebanese. I believe there will be no need for any other forces after the Israeli forces' withdrawal. I cite here what French President Chirac said. He said that after the Israelis withdraw from Lebanon he thinks Syria will stay in Lebanon for a short period to enable the Lebanese to deploy their forces there.

Question: Is there any chance of getting rid of Hizballah and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] in south Lebanon [as received]?

The president: Once a comprehensive settlement and an agreement with Syria have been reached, I do not think there will be any need for these parties to operate there, because there will be no excuse for their presence. Everything will be resolved once a comprehensive settlement and an agreement among the Israelis, Syrians, and Lebanese is reached.

I believe Israel has helped Hamas to fight the PLO. But Hamas is now working against Israel and the PLO. If Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat is subjected to an attempt to liquidate, or assassinate, him, that will be extremely grave for the peace process. The Palestinian president is very brave. He took the peace initiative and took part in the Declaration of Principles in Oslo. He went to Gaza and faced numerous problems, including sweeping unemployment and the lack of an infrastructure. The conditions there do not encourage anyone to invest.

The Palestinian president has begun his work there. The problem lies with the donor states. This problem is delaying everything. I believe 'Arafat is extremely important to the peace process at this stage.

Question: What about the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and its results?

The president: A meeting was held in Washington a week ago to follow up on the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. But some forces are trying to make changes or rearrange priorities that are not commensurate with the Sharm al-Shaykh statement. The statement made it clear that peace should be the top priority; the security measures second; and the condemnation of terrorism third and last. A conference will be held on 22 April on the ministerial level to resume the follow-up process.

Question: What about the U.S. attempt to isolate Iran and impose an economic ban on it in view of its support for terrorism? And what about the French idea of dialogue?

The president: I do not want to go into details but, as a matter of principle, Iran must end its interference in others' affairs and renounce terrorism. Iran must also stop helping the elements who foment problems everywhere. I do not want to go into details. If we succeed in controlling this I believe Iran will have no problems with the international community.

Question: What about the imposition of a ban on Iran?

The president: There are extremes. It is an issue of interests for the various countries. Some countries say no to the ban, while others want to impose it. There are also those who have common interests with Iran. I believe that we, or the international community, must try to convince Iran to put an end to the problem. Otherwise the situation will become more complicated.

Egypt: Musa—Position on Israel's Nuclear Policy Will Not Change

NC0604204696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2025 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has reiterated that Egypt's position on opposing Israel's nuclear policy is unchanged and well known. He confirmed that this position will not change.

Musa was commenting on a protest Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq lodged during a meeting with the

Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv about Egypt's position on Israel's nuclear policy. Musa said that Egypt's position on this matter will not change whether Israel protests or not. He said that the protest should be against Israel's nuclear policy. Such a protest is necessary and appropriate, he remarked.

Musa pointed out that the Egyptian policy will not change because it seeks to protect the region's security, something that conflicts with any Israeli nuclear arms, action, or effort. He remarked that this will lead to a nuclear arms race in the region.

Musa referred in this context to President Mubarak's remarks the day before yesterday, Thursday [4 April], in which he reiterated Egypt's continued opposition to the existence of nuclear programs in the region that are not subject to supervision.

Egypt: Musa Says No Evidence on Libyan Chemical Weapons Plant

NC0604203296 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2005 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has stated that Egypt has no evidence of the existence of a chemical weapons plant in Libya. He remarked that such a thing would require many contacts.

Responding to reporters' questions today about the claims of U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry about chemical weapon plants in Libya, Musa said: When a problem develops concerning the kind of suspicions Perry mentioned, the matter should be handled through calm diplomacy.

Asked whether Egypt and the United states have differences on the draft resolution on Sudan at the Security Council, the foreign minister said: Some differences indeed emerged during the UN Security Council discussions. There are also differences among a number of members. He confirmed that Egypt's position on the matter remains unchanged.

Minister Musa was asked about reports that Yemen will choose the military option to recover the island of Hanish al-Kabir. He said: It was clear during the recent visit to Egypt by Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih that Yemen is pursuing a peaceful solution through French mediation. Accordingly, there is nothing in the air about a war on Hanish or a military confrontation. Talks are revolving around a peaceful solution and the French initiative.

Touching on Egypt's positive stance on the draft resolution on sanctions against Sudan, Musa said that this position draws on certain principles that will never change. He added: We are talking about the need for Sudan to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions and hand the suspects over to Ethiopia. As for the sanctions against Sudan, Egypt does not want the Sudanese people harmed. However, he added, this does not abrogate the need for Sudan to respect and comply with the Security Council resolutions.

Egypt: U.S. 'Double Standards' on Libyan Chemical Factory Assailed

NC0804071596 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0612 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 8 Apr (MENA)—The newspaper AL-AHRAM has asked the United States to apply the same standards to every country when discussing the removal of weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East. The paper says that equal standards and the need to remove Israel's nuclear weapons and put its reactors under international supervision are necessary to give credibility to the United States' international stances. This could contribute to halting unconventional armament in the region.

In its comment today the newspaper says that international double standards or the standards some countries apply to disarmament in the region, or even regarding armament programs, cost international sides or countries their credibility and turn them into a biased party that wants to keep the capabilities of one side under control at the expense of another side.

The newspaper adds that the U.S. campaign against Libya, accusing it of building a chemical weapons factory, does not go along with the U.S. stance that turns a blind eye to the Israeli nuclear reactors that do not come under any international supervision.

The paper notes that it would be better for the United States to exert a real effort to push Israel toward signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in line with destroying Iraq's weapons and in line with the U.S. policy toward Arab countries that are merely suspected of attempting to build a factory that could be used to produce chemical weapons.

Egypt: 2 Libyan Police Said Killed in Attack on Egyptian Consulate in Libya

NC0504182296 Paris AFP in English
1819 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Al-Sallum, Egypt, April 5 (AFP)—Two Libyan police officers were killed in an attack against the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi by Libyan Muslim fundamentalists, travelers arriving here Friday [5 April] told AFP.

The attack took place late Thursday, travelers said.

Egypt: MENA Reports Consulate Assault; Envoy Says No Attack

NC0504211896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2105 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Sallum, 5 Apr (MENA)—Travelers arriving at the al-Sallum border point have stated that Libyan policemen guarding the Egyptian Consulate in Benghazi were attacked by extremist elements tonight aiming to seize weapons. An exchange of fire took place between the two sides. The Libyan security authorities are combing the area to apprehend the assailants.

The travelers state that the attack did not target the consulate building; its aim was to seize police weapons.

Egyptian Ambassador in Tripoli Ahmad Wahdan has stated that no Egyptian installation in Tripoli or Benghazi has come under any attack.

Egypt: Musa—Israeli-Turkish Air Force Agreement 'Very Serious'

NC0704123996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1210 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 7 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has stressed that the signing of an agreement between the Israeli and Turkish air forces is under strict scrutiny. He added: "We will hold contacts with Turkey and Israel over this issue."

Musa went on: "This is a very serious issue that concerns security in the region. Our response to it will be clear." He added: "Egypt will not allow security to be upset in favor of one side at the expense of another."

The foreign minister was commenting on recent Israeli newspaper reports that an agreement has been signed between the Israeli and Turkish air forces allowing the warplanes of the two countries to use military airfields in the other country for combat sorties and for exercises in their respective airspace.

Egypt: Writer Comments on 'Rumors' of Crises With Syria

NC0604173296 Cairo MENA in English 1555 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, 6 Apr (MENA)—Ibrahim Sa'dah, editor-in-chief of the Cairo Arabic weekly AKHBAR AL-YAWM, in a leading article today, lauded the way President Husni Mubarak and Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad deal with any difference which might crop up between the two countries.

In an article today Sa'dah said that it had been rumored that there was a crisis between Egypt and Syria and that the crisis began when Syria refused to attend the Sharm al-Shaykh peacemakers summit.

The rumors said there was a deadlock between Cairo and Damascus and that mediations made by friends of the two sides to contain the crisis have failed.

Those spreading these rumors were surprised when President Husni Mubarak flew to Damascus on Tuesday [2 April] on a lightning visit of a few hours which he spent in talks with President al-Asad.

At a joint press conference with President al-Asad, President Mubarak said he did not need to repeat what he had said on previous occasion about the strength of relations between him and President al-Asad and between the Egyptian and Syrian peoples and stressed that a difference may take place "between brothers" on a certain subject but this did not mean an estrangement as some (foreign) news agencies had said.

Sa'dah said: Presidents Mubarak and al-Asad were at the level of their responsibilities. A difference in opinion did not affect relations of cordiality. Telephone contacts did not cease and mutual visits did not stop.

The meeting between presidents Mubarak and al-Asad was warm as usual, Sa'dah said.

Libya

Libya: Oil Talks With Iran Open in Tripoli

LD0604204996 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 1930 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Libyan Arab-Iranian talks on petroleum began in Tripoli this morning. The talks were attended by Dr. (Nejat Hadi), the brother secretary-general at the General People's Committee for Energy and the Iranian deputy petroleum minister.

Cooperation between the Great Jamahiriyah and Iran in the sphere of petroleum was discussed at the talks.

The brother secretary of the National Petroleum Corporation and Iran's ambassador to the Great Jamahiriyah participated in the talks.

Libya: Unity Committee Denies Musa Visited Tripoli

LD0704112096 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 0710 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 7 Apr — A source at the secretariat of the General People's Committee for Unity denied news circulated by the media yesterday and the day before yesterday over a visit paid by brother 'Amr Musa, the foreign affairs minister in the Arab Republic of Egypt, to the Great Jamahiriyah. The source affirmed that this visit had never taken place.

Libya: Security Chief Visits Egypt Following 'U.S. Threats'

LD0704185996 Tripoli JANA in Arabic 1820 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tripoli, 7 Apr (JANA) — Brother Musa Kusah, the director of the external security organization [name and title as received], paid a visit to Egypt recently, during which he met Egyptian officials. This was after the latest fabricated U.S. threats against the Great Jamahiriyah.

Egyptian officials have confirmed to Brother Musa Kusah that the Americans had not provided even one piece of evidence — whether photographic, information, or in any other form — contrary to what the U.S. defense secretary has said.

Libya: JANA Accuses CIA of 'Racial Plot' Behind Brown's Plane Crash

LD0504144796 Tripoli JANA in English 1431 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Zagreb, 5 April, JAMAHIRIYAH NEWS AGENCY — In a further development regarding the crash of the American aeroplane, which was transporting the American commerce minister, Ron Brown and more than 30 American experts and ended in a fatal crash...fresh information suggested that the American minister was the victim of a racial plot, due to his black colour and due to his kmown opposition for all economic measures taken by the American Government against the Great Jamahiriyah.

The information point the accusation fingures towards the C.I.A. which was revealed to have been behind the selection of the economists and experts who accompanied the minister, with the intention of getting rid of them in a mass murder process.

The information coincided with news reports of what had been described as human error that led to the crash. The reports indicated that, as the aeroplane was not equipped with a black box, then nothing could be ruled out.

Libya: Plane Crash Called Part of CIA 'Mass Assassination Operation'

LD0504222096 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 1930 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The latest information on the crash of the U.S. airliner which had on board U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and more than 30 other U.S. experts, and which resulted in the death of the American secretary and his companions, affirmed that he was the victim of a racist plot because he was black and because of his well-known opposition to the economic measures taken by the U.S. Government against the Great Jamahiriyah. The latest information indicated that the airliner's engine was deficient and, despite this, the airliner was given permission to be used in the journey without making any repairs or doing any maintenance work on the deficiency, in breach of what was in force [the common practice] in such cases, in accordance with the security and safety measures stipulated by airline legislation and usage. [passage omitted] This new information had strengthened the accusations pointing a finger directly at the CIA as also being behind the choice of the group of economists accompanying the U.S. secretary of commerce, with the intention of getting rid of them in a mass assassination operation. [passage omitted]

Sudan

Sudan: Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi Turns Down Offer To Join New Government

NC0604063096 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 0500 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the opposition Sudanese Ummah Party, has turned down an offer by President 'Umar al-Bashir to include his party in the new Sudanese Government. Mubarak al-Mahdi, official in charge of foreign affairs with the Ummah Party, said al-Sadiq al-Mahdi rejected al-Bashir's offer saying it would be a political suicide for the party to cooperate with a government doomed to collapse. He said al-Sadiq al-Mahdi told al-Bashir that the Sudanese opposition is united in its demand that the current regime leave power because it lacks legitimacy. Mubarak al-Mahdi said al-Sadiq al-Mahdi also rejected al-Bashir's attempt to get the Ummah Party to join the government in preparing a new constitution for Sudan. Mubarak al-Mahdi said these moves by the Sudanese regime show its desperate attempts to get out of its current political isolation.

Sudan: Al-Mahdi Explains Refusal To Meet al-Bashir

EA0604150396 (Clandestine) Voice of Sudan Voice of the National Democratic Alliance in Arabic 0400 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Mr. al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the leader of the Ummah Party, has turned down Brigadier [as heard] 'Umar al-Bashir's invitation to meet him on Thursday, 28th March. Al-Mahdi told al-Bashir's emissary that the reason was the nonexistence of a basis of understanding and dialogue under the policies and practices of the cadres of the present regime.

The director of internal security, Major General al-Hadi Abdullah, visited Mr. al-Sadiq al-Mahdi last Sunday [31 March] and asked him to explain his refusal to meet Brig. 'Umar al-Bashir. Al-Mahdi explained that in his 'Id sermon he had made a specific proposal on extracting the country from its current crisis, this being the stepping down of the regime in favor of a transitional government which would hold a constitutional conference and pave the way for free general elections. He said: This was my last proposal, but the regime chose to persist with the comedy of the elections and to opt for spurious legitimacy. The elections were boycotted and rejected by the majority of the Sudanese people. We declared our rejection of the results in the 'Id sermon. There is no longer any room for talking about Sudan's way out of the crisis in the context of the results of these elections and under the existing regime.

Sudan: SPLA Spokesman Denies Talks With Government

NC0704145596 Cairo MENA in English 1430 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nairobi, April 7 (MENA) — Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)-led by John Garang today denied that the movement held contacts with Khartoum government on holding a new round of peace negotiations to settle south Sudan issue.

A spokesman for SPLA said that reports carried by news agencies quoting the secretary general of Higher Council for Islam formed by the government are bare of truth. The SPLA is committed to the initiative made by the Inter-governmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) on settling the issue of south Sudan, the movement's spokesman told MENA.

The Khartoum government had withdrawn from the fourth round of talks held in Nairobi in 1994, after it rejected discussing the declaration of principles reached by IGADD, the spokesman added. The declaration called for setting up a secular political regime in Sudan and allow residents of the south to have the right to self determination, he said.

Sudan: U.S. Accused of Aiding SPLA; Attacks Expected in South

NC0604170796 Beirut AL-DIYAR in Arabic 22 Mar 96 p 14

[Report by Badra Bakhus al-Fighali in Paris]

[FBIS Translated Text] As part of the U.S. scheme to overthrow the ruling regime in Sudan, it is reported in Paris that the United States has bought 60 T-62 tanks from one of the republics of the former Soviet Union and shipped them by sea to Tanzania and then by land via Uganda to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army [SPLA]. It is worth noting that the SPLA has no qualified tank crews.

Washington reportedly has demonstrated its support to the SPLA by evacuating all its diplomats from Khartoum to the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. The SPLA has also received heavy artillery and ammunition from Eritrea and Ethiopia. They were flown to the Ugandan capital, Kampala, by U.S. cargo planes.

The Sudanese Government, for its part, has massed up 40,000 professional fighters from the military and the popular defense militias in the city of Juba to defend it.

The reports anticipate a hot March in the south and east of Sudan. Reports coming from these regions indicate a growing military buildup by the Sudanese opposition in Eritrea, where some 3,000 men from al-Sudan al-Jadid [New Sudan] Brigade and the Sudanese allied forces led by Major General 'Abd-al-'Aziz Khalid are massing. Moreover, dissident troops under the command of Steven Wonder that broke away from the SPLA are getting ready to mount attacks against the government forces across the Ethiopian border.

Furthermore, the local arena is being prepared for disturbances, and military tension is escalating between Egypt and Sudan in the disputed border region of Hala'ib. In the west, the Chadian opposition is expected to launch attacks against the Sudanese Army positions to cut of military supplies and other logistics to some of the areas that are expected to see heated activity.

Sudan: Bomb Said Cause of Recent Sudanese Military Plane Crash

NC0504130096 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1005 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 5 Apr (MENA)— Press reports published here today confirmed that there were secret hands behind the recent explosion aboard a Sudanese C-130 military plane that was coming from Waw in south Sudan. An AL-ITTIHADI leaflet issued by the banned Sudanese Unionist Party and distributed in Khartoum said that there is evidence that there was a time-bomb on the plane, which was in contact with Khartoum airport five minutes before it crashed. The authorities gave no reason for the crash. The leaflet cites technicians as saying that the four-engine Hercules C-130 planes can land under any conditions, even if three engines fail. In addition, eyewitnesses said that the plane's debris was scattered over a large area, which confirms that the explosion was a powerful one. The leaflet denounced what it called the authorities of lies and hypocrisy because they were content to give false and unconvincing information about the incident, which left more than 70 passengers dead.

The leaflet commented on the statement released by the Islamic Group leadership after numerous members of the terrorist groups residing in Sudan made sure of the ruling regime's intention to bargain over them in order to emerge from its current crisis and after it had been ascertained that the U.S. Government demanded that the Sudanese Government hand over more than 40 terrorists who reside in Sudan. It said that the Islamic Group issued a strongly worded statement hinting at the grave consequences that might result from such an action. The Islamic Group concluded its statement by saying: "We will not allow any restriction of the mujahdin and, should we be restricted, we will do the same to others." This is a clear hint, the leaflet says, to what may happen if the Sudanese Government hands over these terrorists, as it tried to do with Usamah Bin-Ladin, who fled Sudan after having realized that the National Islamic Front's regime intended to hand him over to Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, the leaflet confirmed the rebellion that occurred recently within the ranks of the 30th Brigade in the Juba area in south Sudan. This brigade was tasked with protecting the Juba-Tawarit highway. Many officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers refused orders in protest of deteriorating conditions as many personnel were working under very poor conditions and some had worked for four years in a row without rotation.

Sudan: Justice Minister Rejects UN Human Rights Report

EA0604195096 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The minister of justice and the attorney general, Mr. 'Abd-al-Aziz Shiddu, has said that the UN human rights special rapporteur will present his special report on Sudan to the UN committee during its 52nd session to be convened in Geneva from 12 to 15 April.

The minister of justice made it clear that Mr. Caspar Biro had not brought up anything new other than a proposal to appoint observers from Eritrea, Uganda, and Kenya, which, the minister emphasized, was rejected by Sudan, because Eritrea and Uganda, he said, had hostile attitudes to Sudan. He said that all the allegations made were baseless and not backed by concrete facts.

He added that Sudan would present its report to the committee refuting the baseless allegations made in Biro's report.

Bahrain

Bahrain: Explosion Destroys 2 Stores in Shopping Mall

NC0704111996 Paris AFP in English
1110 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, April 7 (AFP) — An explosion occurred early Sunday [7 April] at a shopping center which is part of the Sheraton Hotel in the Bahraini capital burning two stores but causing no injuries, witnesses and diplomats said.

One store selling video cassettes was completely burned while another store next door was partly burned, they said. There was no damage to the Sheraton Hotel which is linked to the mall through a corridor.

Anti-government protestors led by Shiite Moslems have previously been accused of bombing three hotels since the beginning of the year.

Political unrest erupted in December 1994 when the mainly Sunni Moslem authorities arrested a Shiite Moslem cleric who led calls for the restoration of parliament, suspended in 1975.

At least 21 people have been killed in the troubles.

Bahrain: More on Bombing of Manama Shopping Mall

NC0704133396 Paris AFP in English
1319 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Report by V.S. Venkatraman]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, April 7 (AFP) — Time bombs exploded before dawn on Sunday [7 April] at the Sheraton Hotel's shopping arcade in the Bahraini capital, sparking a fire which burned three stores but caused no casualties, officials said.

"Saboteurs planted explosives and incendiary material rigged with timing devices at the Sheraton shopping mall," a government official said. "The explosions caused a fire which swept through three stores."

Bomb blasts at three other hotels since January have also been blamed on "saboteurs" led by Shiite Moslems who are demanding a restoration of parliament.

"Nobody was wounded or killed because the explosions took place at 2 a.m. (2300 GMT Saturday), while the center was closed," the official said on condition his name not be used.

The police were continuing their investigation into the attack, including how much explosives were used.

The smell of smoke lingered in the mall later Sunday as workers with masks swept debris from the three stores which sold music and video cassettes, jewelry and bathroom products, an AFP correspondent said.

The music store was gutted.

Around 100 shops and off-shore banking offices are located in the center which is popular with foreigners and is also close to the British Embassy.

The attack spared the Sheraton Hotel, which is separated from the center by a small roadway and parking area. The entrance to the Sheraton ballroom is only several feet (meters) from the mall.

Bombs have also exploded this year at the Le Royale Meridien Hotel as well as at the Diplomat Hotel and Baisan Hotel in Manama, where a total of five people were injured.

Meanwhile, the GULF DAILY NEWS reported that six Shiite Moslems were jailed for up to five years and ordered to pay 43,000 dollars in damages for an arson attack in April last year.

The state security court sentenced two of them to five years and the four others to three years in prison after finding them guilty of torching an electricity substation in April last year, the English-language paper said.

Political unrest erupted in December 1994 when the mainly Sunni Moslem authorities arrested a Shiite Moslem cleric who led calls for the restoration of parliament, suspended in 1975.

At least 21 people have been killed in the troubles, including seven Bangladeshis in the March firebombing of a restaurant.

Bahrain: Interior Ministry Source Cited on 7 Apr Arson Attacks

JN0704183096 Manama WAKH in Arabic
1727 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 7 Apr (WAKH) — A responsible source at the Bahraini Interior Ministry said that security agencies received three reports early this morning of arson attacks on some commercial stores in the al-Manamah area. Civil Defense' fire engines rushed to the scene of the incidents. Firemen extinguished the fires and prevented them from spreading to neighboring places. The competent security agencies took all necessary security measures in these areas and began investigatations to track down and arrest the perpetrators.

The responsible source added that two incidents involved arson attacks on two stores in a commercial complex, the first selling clothes and the second cassette tapes.

There was also a fire at a boutique in Government Street in the Bab al-Bahrayn area.

The fires caused varying amounts of damage to the contents of the stores. Initial investigations show that the three fires were started by putting flammable material inside cigarette boxes. The security agencies are continuing their investigations to arrest the perpetrators of these incidents and send them to trial.

Bahrain: 6 Shiites Jailed for 1995 Arson Attacks

NC0704104396 Paris AFP in English
0902 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, April 7 (AFP) — Six Shiite Moslems were jailed for up to five years and ordered to pay 43,000 dollars in damages for an arson attack during anti-government unrest in Bahrain, a newspaper said here Sunday [7 April].

The state security court sentenced two of them to five years and the four others to three years in prison after finding them guilty of torching an electricity substation in April last year, the GULF DAILY NEWS said.

The six, who according to the newspaper confessed to their crimes, were also ordered to pay 16,000 Bahraini dinars (43,000 dollars) in damages.

Those sentenced to five years in prison were identified as Fadl 'Ali 'Abd-al-Husayn Thabit, 30, and 'Abd-al-Nabi 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Adraj, 23, both employed.

The four others were identified as 'Abd-al-Ridha 'Abd-al-Husayn 'Isa, a 23-year-old worker, and students Muhammad Salman Ahmad Thabit, 18, Fadl 'Abd-al-Rasul Radi Ma'tuq, 20, and Taysir Muhammad Muhsin al-El'uwayt, 19.

Unrest erupted in this Gulf Arab archipelago in December 1994 after the mainly Sunni authorities arrested a Shiite Moslem cleric who led demands for the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975.

At least 21 people have been killed in the troubles.

Kuwait

Kuwait: UN Envoy Denies Iraqi Allegations on Recruiting Terrorists

LD0604194796 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic
1748 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The United Nations, 6 Apr — In a message addressed today to the United Nations, the State of Kuwait has denied the Iraqi allegations over the recruitment of Iraqis to carry out subversive and terrorist acts with the aim of undermining the security and stability in Iraq and the international observers mission.

Muhammad Abu al-Hasan, Kuwait's permanent envoy at the United Nations, expressed in a message addressed to the UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali Kuwait's condemnation of those Iraqi allegations, which he described as "a figment of imagination or a naive measure."

He said "nobody believes the lies of the Iraqi regime whose record of dealings with the countries and international and regional organizations reveals a complete loss of credibility." [passage omitted]

Abu al-Hasan said in his message that "what worries us and calls on us to take precautions" was that these allegations "could be a prelude for an action by the Iraqi regime against the UN forces, and then blaming Kuwait."

He also said that the Iraqi allegations, mentioned in a message sent by the foreign affairs minister of the Iraqi regime to Butrus-Ghali on 29 March, came "within a series of the Iraqi regime's attempts to divert attention from the deteriorating internal problems from which the Iraqi people are suffering as a result of its subversive policies."

He added that the Iraqi policy in "levelling accusations against external quarters, and the fabrication of problems and crises is a policy which the Iraqi regime has been pursuing for a long time."

Abu al-Hasan stressed in his message that "what distinguishes Kuwait's foreign policy is its adherence and commitment to the principles of the UN charter, particularly the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries."

He called on the Iraqi regime to commit itself to the implementation of all the UN Security Council's resolutions in connection with its aggression against Kuwait "for achieving security and stability in the Gulf region, and easing the suffering of the Iraqi people who have endured much of their regime's wrong policies and calculations."

Kuwait: 5 People Attack Newspaper Building

LD0604140596 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic
1339 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kuwait, 6 Apr — The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior has stated that five people, one of them carrying a gun, this morning entered the premises of the ARAB TIMES newspaper — which belongs to the al-Siyasah establishment for printing, press, and publications — and threatened the journalists who were inside at the time.

Lieutenant Colonel 'Adil al-Ibrahim, head of the Ministry of Interior's Public Relations Administration, said in a press statement that a member of staff at the newspaper had managed to catch one of the five. Security men were contacted and they immediately moved to the scene.

He added that security authorities immediately circulated the specifications of the car that the other four got into. Security authorities arrested them shortly afterwards, following a car chase. They have been referred to the competent authorities for investigations.

Al-Ibrahim said that the Ministry of Interior will announce details of the incident at the end of the investigations of these people to find out the reasons and motives behind what they did.

Kuwait: 5 'Assailants' Arrested After Brawl at Newspaper

NC0604143096 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1205 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kuwait, 6 Apr (MENA)—Sulayman al-Jarallah, deputy chief editor of the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-SIYASAH, has expressed regret over the incident that took place at the newspaper today. He said the paper will continue its policy against terrorism and extremists.

In remarks to MENA, al-Jarallah said seven bearded men entered the newspaper's premises this morning. They began to argue with some editors from the ARAB TIMES, an English-language paper published by Dar al-Siyasah, over a cartoon published by the paper two days ago. The argument turned into a fist-fight and security men had to be called in.

Al-Jarallah pointed out that nobody was hurt and that one of the pistols used by the assailants — which was loaded — had been seized. He added that policemen arrested five of the assailants after a chase, while the remaining two managed to escape.

Meanwhile, eyewitnesses today reported hearing gunshots from the vicinity of the newspaper AL-SIYASAH.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Crown Prince 'Abdallah, Prince Sultan Receive 'Arafat

LD0704135996 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Television Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz; crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guard; received His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat, president of the state of Palestine, and the delegation accompanying him today in his highness' office at the royal court at al-Yamamah Palace

The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal, foreign affairs minister; His Excellency Dr. Musa'id al-Ayban, minister of state and member of the Council of Ministers; His Excellency 'Abd al-Muhsin Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Tuwayjiri, adviser at the office of his highness the crown prince; and Mustafa Hashim Dib, Palestinian ambassador to the Kingdom. [passage omitted]

His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz; second deputy prime minister, minister of defense and aviation, and inspector general; received His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat, president of the state of Palestine, this afternoon at his highness' palace at al-'Aziziyah.

During the meeting, issues of common concern were discussed. The meeting was attended by the delegation accompanying His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat and Mustafa Hashim Dib, Palestinian ambassador to the Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia: 'Arafat Seeking Saudi Help in Lifting Israeli Sanctions

LD0704210996 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] On arrival at King Khalid international airport in Riyadh earlier today, President Yasir 'Arafat of Palestine answered questions by newsmen, saying:

[Begin recording] ['Arafat] I am happy to come here during these important times so as to reassure myself about the health of His Majesty the King who we consider as an asset to the Arab and Islamic nation. May God prolong his life, and bestow good health on him always. God willing, we will pray together with him in the first of the two Qibla and the third of the two holy places, holy Jerusalem. At the same time, I come here to brief his majesty and the officials in the kingdom about the situation we are going through, particularly the difficult situation resulting from the blockade imposed by Israel against our Palestinian people, a blockade that has caused us a great deal of sufferings, losses and problems. At the same time, God willing, I will give them all the other details concerning us as a Palestinian people and Palestinian cause.

[Unidentified correspondent] Will you be asking for the help of the Kingdom for the removal of the unjust blockade imposed on the Palestinian people?

['Arafat] No doubt, and here I want to stress the prominent role played by the Saudi foreign minister at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit conference, and also the role played by the Saudi delegate to the recent meeting in Washington following up the Sham al-Shaykh conference, together with our other Arab brothers [words indistinct], which led to these important resolutions.

[Correspondent] Will this visit have a positive effect on Saudi-Palestinian relations?

['Arafat] Not just this visit. Thanks be to God, we cherish our relations. The position of Saudi Arabia and those of King Fahd, Their Highnesses the princes, and the Saudi people to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause have not changed at any moment. During the difficult times the Arab nation passed through, they have always been at the forefront to help the Palestinian people at all the times we have been through. Therefore, on behalf of the Palestinian people, I address my greetings and express appreciation for the king, my brothers the princes in charge in the state and government, as well as the fraternal Saudi people for these principled and firm positions which we greatly cherish.

[Correspondent] Will the Palestinian national authority continue to deal with Israel while Israel violates the agreements signed with with, and while the blockade continues?

['Arafat] We are calling for a meeting of the security council. The latest letter I sent to Dr. Butrus-Ghali called for a meeting of the security council to examine these grave violations. The day before yesterday [5 April], I had a telephone contact with him when he was in Tokyo, on this subject. I believe that from tomorrow, the security council will start debating these issues. [end recording]

Saudi Arabia: 'Arafat Praises Talks With Saudi Officials

LD0804130596 Riyadh SPA in English 1234 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riyadh, April 8, SPA — Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat said he had asked Crown Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, deputy premier and commander of the national guard, to convey his greetings to custodian of the two holy mosques King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz.

In a statement to the pressmen here last night 'Arafat said his talks with Prince 'Abdallah have yielded positive and constructive results.

I have briefed Prince 'Abdallah on all difficulties and dangers caused by the Israeli inhuman siege in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 'Arafat said.

'Arafat pointed out that his talks with Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, second deputy premier, defence and aviation minister and inspector general, were held in a fraternal atmosphere.

'Arafat expressed optimism about the outcome of his visit to the Kingdom and hoped that the international community would positively react to the developments of the situation in the regions of the Palestinian autonomy rule.

Saudi Arabia: 'Arafat Praises 'Supportive' Stance of Saudi Government

LD0704134296 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1049 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah, 7 Apr — His Excellency Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat praised the supportive and continuous stance of the government of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, custodian of the two holy mosques, on the issue of Jerusalem and for considering it the main pillar for the building of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

He said that "history will not forget the Kingdom's stance in support of the Palestinian cause from its beginning until now."

He affirmed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was and still is playing a positive and distinguished role in supporting the Palestinian cause in all international bodies.

His highness the Palestinian president pointed out in a statement to the newspaper UKAZ, published in today's edition, that the just and comprehensive peace in the region cannot be achieved without the complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem, the Golan, and occupied Lebanese territories.

Saudi Arabia: Ban on Political Meetings During Hajj Reaffirmed

LD0704050696 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 0017 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 6 April] — Remarking on a report disseminated by REUTER today, Saturday [6 April] — quoting Iranian President 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani saying that Iranian pilgrims were planning to hold political meetings during this year's pilgrimage season, an official source at the Interior Ministry said that in the past the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia had not allowed such meetings to be held, and that Iranian officials were well aware of that.

In a statement to SPA, the official source said that the holding of such meetings would not be allowed, because that would be fully in violation of pilgrimage rites and a threat to the security and safety of pilgrims, and out of our concern for their safety and security so that they would be able to devote themselves to performing pilgrimage and in compliance with God's words [Koranic verses]: "For Hajj are well known months. If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, wickedness, or wrangling."

At the end of his statement, the official source at the Interior Ministry said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would not under any condition tolerate those who overstep the limits set by God in His secure house and sacred months, and that it would make them fully accountable.

Saudi Arabia: No Countries Willing To Take Saudi Dissident Al-Mas'ari

MS0804094096 London THE GUARDIAN in English 8 Apr 96 p 8

[Anonymous report: "Britain Fails To Find Country To Take in Saudi Dissident]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Countries as far afield as Sweden and New Zealand have refused to take the Saudi dissident, Professor Mohammad al-Mas'ari, it was disclosed yesterday.

According to Whitehall sources, fruitless attempts were made at the opening of the Inter-Governmental Conference in Turin on March 29 to persuade individual European Union members to take Professor al-Mas'ari. Further discussions with neutral countries, such as Switzerland, and Commonwealth nations like New Zealand, have proved equally unsuccessful.

"Although we are disappointed so far, the reluctance of other countries to accept Professor al-Mas'ari gives backing to the Government's stance on this," said a senior Whitehall official.

The dissident fled Saudi Arabia in 1994 after being arrested. In Britain he has campaigned against the Saudi royal family.

In January he was ordered to leave Britain for Dominica in the Caribbean, which had agreed to take him. But last month the professor won an appeal against deportation after an independent appeals panel said his life could be put in danger in Dominica.

The Saudi ambassador to Britain, Ghazi al-Qusaibi, has warned that his continuing presence will damage bilateral relations.

Iraq: 'Abd-al-Ghafur Says Iraq Wants UN Dialogue 'To Succeed'

JN0704075196 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0715 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 7 Apr (INA) — 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abd-al-Ghafur, member of the Iraq Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, said the implementation of Paragraph 22 of Resolution 678 is a prelude to ending the blockade against the Iraqi people.

Addressing a celebration yesterday on the 49th anniversary of the founding of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party and the launching of the Arab Liberation Front in 1969, 'Abd-al-Ghafur said: Iraq wants the dialogue with the United Nations on oil for food and other necessities to succeed. Iraq is working to make it succeed. However, Iraq thinks that the Security Council must also fulfill its commitments toward Iraq by implementing Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 as a prelude to ending the unfair blockade once and for all.

'Abd-al-Ghafur called on the masses of the Palestinian people and their struggling forces to be careful and watch out for the Zionist scheme that seeks to ignite infighting between the Palestinian masses. This requires that the Palestinian strugglers deny the Zionist enemy this chance and foil its schemes.

Iraq: Libyan Ship Delivers Wheat to Umm Qasr Port

JN0604153296 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1355 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Umm Qasr, al-Basrah, Baghdad, 6 Apr (INA) — A ship sent by the fraternal Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah to the Iraqi people arrived at Umm Qasr today carrying 22,500 tonnes of wheat.

Iraq: Deputy Assembly Speaker, Assembly Secretary Elected

JN0804103896 Baghdad INA in English 1005 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, April 8, INA—Iraq's National Assembly elected today Dr. Sa'dun Hammadi as its speaker for the forthcoming four years.

Dr. Hammadi, who chaired the assembly in its 2nd session in 1984, has gained 248 votes out of 250 votes, which represent the number of the assembly's members.

The assembly also elected Ghanim 'Aziz as a deputy speaker and 'Abd-al-Qadir al-Janabi as a secretary of the assembly, who gained 223 votes.

Iraq: National Accord Issues Statement on Damascus Meeting

JN0804091696 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 8 Apr 96 p 22

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, PETRA—A responsible source of the Iraqi National Accord movement in Amman expressed hope that the meetings and conferences the Iraqi opposition parties will hold in the future will have positive results that serve the Iraqi people's causes and support their struggle for their liberties and dignity.

In a press statement on the results of the meeting of the Iraqi opposition parties, which concluded in Damascus, the source said: We wish that the meeting would have resulted in serious and active decisions that bolster the capabilities of our people and the unity of the national opposition forces to wage the battle of their joint destiny that has become close and decisive to rescue our people from their tribulation.

The source regretted that the representative of the Iraqi Communist Party did not participate in the conference although he was invited and he arrived in Damascus. The source called for overcoming marginal differences and respecting the opinion of the other parties in line with the democratic concepts to which all are committed as the ideal means for cooperation and relations between all opposition forces.

The source emphasized that the Iraqi National Accord movement believes that good preparations should be made for such meetings and a clear and specific agenda should be set for them, and they should be given ample time so that they will be positive, active, and successful in a way that will give the chance for all opposition forces, parties, and national figures to participate actively in these meetings.

The source called for efforts to recruit Arab support for the Iraqi people's struggle for their freedom, democracy, pluralism, and basic rights without undermining the positions and initiatives of the sisterly states that support the Iraqi people and their just causes in making the aspired change.

Iraq: SAIRI Chairman al-Hakim on Damascus Meetings

NC0504154096 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1450 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 5 Apr (MENA)—Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SAIRI], has underlined the importance of the current meetings of the Iraqi opposition factions in Damascus.

In an interview with MENA, al-Hakim said that the meetings seek to prepare for an expanded meeting of all the Iraqi opposition factions. This meeting's focus would be drawing up a practical program to deal with the ruling regime in Iraq, with a view to overthrowing and replacing it. He pointed out that the political and media line of the Iraqi opposition has been established. What remains is to draw up a practical program for dealing with the regime, he said.

Commenting on the Jordanian plan to overthrow the Iraqi regime and establish a Jordanian-Iraqi confederation, al-Hakim said: If this confederation is based on sectarian or ethnic grounds that might lead to Iraq's partition, this will be rejected by the opposition factions currently meeting in Damascus.

Al-Hakim reaffirmed that it is the Iraqi people who are primarily responsible for making the change to establish an independent and united Iraq. The Iraqi issue is too big to be an internal issue, because the regime's policy has weakened and created wide differences among the Arab people, particularly after the invasion of Kuwait, he said, calling on Arab states to back the Iraqi people to bring about change.

Touching on the recent election of the Iraqi National Assembly, al-Hakim said: The elections were illegal; they do not exist in the Constitution. Moreover, he said, the elected assembly has no powers according to the Constitution.

He pointed out that the elections were held by a decision from the Revolution Command Council, which can dissolve the elected council any time. He added that the Revolution Command Council alone can appoint ministers and that it is in control of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

On the Iraqi opposition's military presence in northern Iraq, al-Hakim remarked that it is necessary to be present inside Iraq, not outside it, to avoid foreign intervention. That is why the opposition is present from the south to the north, he said.

Al-Hakim added: We believe that the Kurdistan region is an Iraqi region and an inseparable part of Iraq. It should not be excluded from the political, media, and military effort of the opposition, he said.

Iraq: PUK Commander, 5 Others Defect to KDP

LD0704151396 Tehran IRNA in English 1147 GMT 7 Apr 96

[All names as received]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanandaj, Kurdistan Prov., April 7, IRNA — A regiment commander of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] has defected to Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), along with his deputy and four other PUK members, KDP Radio said in a report, monitored here on Sunday [7 April]. Commander Esmael Soleyman, his deputy Akram Mohammad Saleh and four other forces from a brigade stationed near the northern Iraqi town of Zour, surrendered themselves to the rival group on Friday [5 April].

This is the second such an incident reported by KDP in less than a month.

According to a report by the radio on last Tuesday [2 April], a PUK brigade commander and 13 of his forces had defected to KDP.

None of the reports have been confirmed by independent sources.

Iraq: PUK Confronts Iraqi Unit Attacking Travelers

NC0604162196 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1500 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An Iraqi 5th Brigade unit yesterday afternoon attacked the village of 'Uwaynah in Irbil Governorate to detain citizens who travel between the liberated areas of Kurdistan and the areas under the control of the Iraqi regime. A Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] force engaged the Iraqi unit. In the ensuing clash an Iraqi soldier was killed and another, Bashshar 'Abd-al-Jabbar, born in 1975 and who is from al-Basrah, was taken prisoner. The Iraqi force left behind two Kalashnikov rifles and some military equipment. Earlier, Iraqi forces in the village of Sharwayran torched two vehicles belonging to some people in the area.

Israel: Peres Comments on Iranian, Hamas Terrorism

TA0704150396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1400 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In his address to the Labor Party convention this afternoon, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres explained that several weeks ago Belgian customs discovered dozens of kilograms of explosives on an Iranian vessel which arrived in the port of Antwerp. It is believed that these explosives were meant to be used in attacks against Jewish targets. The ship disembarked from the port of Bandar-e 'Abbas late February and was destined to arrive at the port of Hamburg, Germany. Mr. Peres added that Iran wants to replace the Israeli Government.

Referring to Palestinian terrorism, Mr. Peres said that both the Palestinians and Israel were surprised by the scope of the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Mr. Peres detailed this morning's inner cabinet decisions about the struggle against terrorism. He reiterated his commitment to submit the permanent agreement with the Palestinians to a referendum.

At the end of his remarks, the prime minister asked the Labor Party convention to insert a new immigrant into the Labor Knesset list. He promised that one of the ministers in the next government, if it is formed by him, will resign from the Knesset and make room for the first candidate in the list who did not make it into the Knesset.

Israel: More on Peres' Remarks on Iranian Plan To Unseat Labor

TA0804102196 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 8 Apr 96 pp A1, A10

[Report by Yerah Tal]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Israeli intelligence services have uncovered evidence indicating that the Iranian Government seeks to bring down the Israeli "peace government" and to derail the peace process, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said in an address to the Labor convention yesterday.

According to Peres, the evidence stems from the exposure of an attempt to smuggle Iranian warfare materials disguised as civilian cargo aboard a ship as it was unloading its cargo in Antwerp. Some details of the affair had been reported by the press.

Peres said the warfare materials, including state-of-the-art destructive weapons, were designed for attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets in Europe. The prime minister lashed out at four European countries — which he did not name — that have recently allocated billions of dollars toward rehabilitating the Iranian economy, in spite of the information pointing to Iranian responsibility for terror.

[Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English, in a front-page report by David Makovsky and Michal Yudelman, reports that, interviewed by the POST on 7 April, Peres referred to the evidence of Iran's intention to unseat Labor: "'For this, I have 100 percent evidence, and we have evidence they are pressing upon Islamic Jihad and other subversive organizations to act against Israel before the elections.' But he refused to reveal this evidence."]

The Likud response team issued the following reaction to Peres' remarks: "Shim'on Peres no longer believes in his ability to muster his party's confidence, and he is therefore enlisting the aid of all Israel's foes to sway the public against voting for the Likud. Had the Likud made similar observations about Shim'on Peres, it would have been accused of sedition." [passage omitted]

A poll commissioned by Labor shows that a considerable portion of the public does not believe that Peres truly intends to hold a referendum on the permanent agreement with the Palestinians. Peres had therefore agreed to the suggestion of Hayim Ramon, chairman of the party's public relations headquarters, to reiterate his commitment in advertisements to be published in various newspapers.

Responding to the Likud argument that the elections are the real referendum, Peres said the elections will give the nation an opportunity to decide who is to receive the mandate to negotiate, and the outcome of the negotiations that will be held during the next term will be brought up for national endorsement in a referendum.

Peres further said that the permanent arrangement with the Palestinians will require "many creative solutions," and the entire product will be brought up in a national referendum to allow wavering citizens to make up their minds. "I will not settle for the endorsement of the agreements by Labor Party members only, and not even for the extra endorsement of Meretz. There is no reason why Likud or NRP [National Religious Party] members should not also lend their support to peace. I am certain that the results will be much better than all the current pessimistic predictions."

The prime minister listed the principles that will guide Israel in the permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians, including the following: a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty; no return to the 1967 borders; separation between the two nations; rejection of the Palestinian demand for the right of return for refugees;

the Jordan River as Israel's eastern border; no foreign army between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River; most settlers are to remain under Israeli rule; and preference for resolving the situation through a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. [passage omitted]

Israel: Shin Bet Captures Recruited Islamic Jihad 'Terrorist'

TA0704153496 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1400 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] It has just been released that a few weeks ago the Shin Bet captured a Palestinian student, a Gaza Strip resident, who was recruited into the Islamic Jihad ranks in Turkey and who underwent military training which also included guidance on intelligence and espionage matters in Iran. The man was trained to carry out attacks on Israeli targets. Our correspondent Golan Yokhpaz has the details:

[Yokhpaz] Good day to you. This affair, which has been considered very secret in the Shin Bet over recent weeks, sheds light on the manner in which Islamic Jihad terrorists are recruited overseas for attacks against Israeli targets. The Shin Bet detained a Gaza Strip student who was enlisted into the Islamic Jihad's ranks in Turkey and who underwent military training in Iran for the perpetration of terrorist acts. It is about a month ago that Khalil Zuhdi Sulayman Abu-'Isa, a 24-year-old resident of the Jabalyah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, returned from studying medicine in Turkey and was immediately detained by the Shin Bet in Israel. During his interrogation by the Shin Bet he said that about a year ago, during his school year in Turkey, he was recruited by an Islamic Jihad functionary in Turkey. The man offered him training in Iran so that he could partake in the Islamic Jihad activity. After the suspect consented he was provided with suitable certificates for his mission in Iran, certificates which were prepared for him in advance, in coordination with the Iranian Embassy in Turkey which knew of the entire affair. These falsified certificates, which the suspect received from an Islamic Jihad functionary via Iranian Embassy employees, bear the name of an Iranian civilian. In other words, the Iranian Embassy itself officially took an active part in this whole affair.

Last August the man flew to Iran, after coordinating with two Iranian Embassy employees in Turkey. Immediately upon arriving at the Iranian airport he was received by an Islamic Jihad representative in Iran, along with two more Iranians who transported him to a training camp in Iran. In the camp he met additional activists who underwent training there, some of them having arrived from Lebanon and Syria, as well as other Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip. The man was given a code name, just like a spy, and began to undergo training with various weapons, in addition to receiving guidance and briefings on intelligence issues, surveillance, classified communication, and so on and so forth, all in order to prepare him for attacks against Israeli targets. At the end of this training the man returned to Turkey where he gave back the fake passport he received from the Islamic Jihad functionary, and later, upon arriving at the Israeli airport, he was picked up.

During his Shin Bet interrogation he noted that the goal of the training was to prepare him, as a military recruit of the Islamic Jihad, for future anti-Israeli attacks.

Israel: Settler Leaders React to Reported Contacts With PA

TA0704121096 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1000 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The secretary general of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza said today that the settlers believe that Labor and Shim'on Peres publicized the fact that senior settlers met recently with senior Palestinian Authority [PA] officials. Council leaders said this morning that these meetings took place without the council's knowledge or approval, and with the participation of naive people, as they defined them, who may cause damage to the settler community. Our correspondent Uri Gordon reports.

[Begin recording] [Gordon] Both the left and the right of the political map have so far refused to react to this morning's HA'ARETZ report on secret talks between settler leaders and PA officials. This concerns the presentation of positions only, and not political negotiations, but the settler leaders this morning expressed their opposition to holding contacts. Uri Ari'el, head of the council, made the following remarks.

[Ari'el] This runs counter to the council's position, and the contacts were held without its knowledge or approval. Regrettably, good and naive people make bad mistakes which we should correct. I do not think that any of us can do anything better than the government; such people only cause damage. [passage omitted]

According to this morning's report, the Prime Minister's Office was up to date on the content of the talks, but an official comment has not yet been received, and as we said, senior left and right personages have also refused to react so far. [end recording]

Israel: Netanyahu Submits Candidacy for Premiership, Holds Contacts With Arabs

TA0804071996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0700 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu says that senior Likud members recently held contacts with numerous Arab world elements who find interest in the Likud. Knesset Member Netanyahu hinted that reference is to Persian Gulf countries that do not have political ties with Israel, but he refused to name them.

On meetings between senior Palestinian Authority officials and leaders of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza, Netanyahu said this move reflects the settler leaders' feeling that they have been abandoned in the area, as he put it.

Our correspondent Gil Litman reports that a short while ago the Likud head signed the form in which he submitted his candidacy for the premiership and expressed his confidence that he would be elected.

Israel: Likud Slogan — 'Netanyahu: Making a Secure Peace'

TA0804080696 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 8 Apr 96 p 2

[Report by Sarah Honig]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The Likud yesterday unveiled its answer to Labor's new hawkish campaign stance. While Labor asserts that "Israel is strong with Peres," the Likud's slogan is "Netanyahu: Making a secure peace."

The new line was revealed at a press conference with the party's campaign chairman Yitzhaq Mordekhay, information director Limor Livnat, and strategy head Dan Meridor. They openly admitted that the target for the campaign is the small floating vote.

Meridor took Peres to task for talking tough to impress the floating vote, "while hiding his intention to cede almost everything. Labor has gone so far as to actually copy the Likud platform in its attempt to conceal its real aims. We know that the first item on the agenda, according to the Oslo accords, is Jerusalem but Labor is promising — as it did misleadingly in the case of the Golan — not to make any concessions. Jerusalem will be all ours, they say, copying the Likud platform. They say they will not return to the 1967 borders, also copying the Likud platform."

As for his own party, Meridor said, "We may have opposed the Oslo process, but it had created faits accomplis which our government will not ignore." [passage omitted]

Israel: Economic Agreement With Qatar Expected 'Within 3 Weeks'

TA0404130596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel and Qatar will sign an economic agreement within three weeks. Immediately afterward, a delegation from the Manufacturers' Association will leave for Qatar to examine the possibilities for cooperation with their Qatari colleagues in the fields of petrochemicals, desalination, and desert agriculture.

This was revealed by Dan Propper, president of the Manufacturers' Association, who accompanied Prime Minister Shim'on Peres to Oman and Qatar.

Israel: Negotiations With Qatar To Begin on 'Two Economic Charters'

TA0704104096 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 7 Apr 96 p C3

[FBIS Translated Text] The Israeli and Qatari Governments will soon enter negotiations on signing two economic charters: one to prevent dual taxation and the second to protect investments. This was agreed upon at a meeting between Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and the emir of Qatar during the Israeli prime minister's tour of the Gulf states at the beginning of last week.

The two charters aim to encourage economic ties between the two countries. Israel has signed similar charters with many countries.

Professional teams from the Israeli and Qatari Finance Ministries will meet in order to consolidate a final version of the agreements.

Finance Ministry sources disclosed yesterday that during Peres' visit to Qatar, Finance Ministry Director General David Brodet met with the Qatari finance minister and the foreign minister to discuss several issues.

In the course of Peres' meetings in Oman it was agreed that a delegation of Israeli businessmen would tour Oman in the near future, in an attempt to foster cooperation with local businessmen in various economic fields.

Israel: Poll Indicates Large Support for Peres Referendum Idea

TA0504182496 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 5 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] A large majority of the public supports the prime minister's proposal to hold a referendum on approving the permanent arrangement with the Palestinians. A poll conducted by the Teleseqer Institute for Channel 2 indicates that about 71 percent of those polled expressed support for the referendum idea; about 23 percent are opposed; and about 6 percent did not express any position.

[Begin Teleseqer Institute head recording] The public wants to have the last say, especially on very important issues such as negotiations with the Palestinians and the Syrians. The public will always prefer a referendum to a decision someone else might make. [end recording]

Israel: Correction—U.S. Reportedly for Strategic Accord, Not Defense Pact

TA0504160696 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 5 Apr 96 p A4

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Israel has submitted to the United States the draft of the joint statement to be presented by Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and U.S. President Bill Clinton after their meeting in Washington at the end of April. The two leaders will announce the launching of negotiations aimed at signing a new strategic agreement, as they continue to examine the option of a defense pact. According to plans, the strategic agreement would be signed in September, close to the U.S. presidential elections.

According to Israeli sources, the Americans only had a few observations about the Israeli draft and tend to accept it, but no agreement has yet been reached on the details. Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq, who was appointed by Peres to coordinate the negotiations with the United States, will meet U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on 22 April to finalize the details of the joint statement.

The Israeli draft notes the U.S. commitment to Israel's security and to upholding and strengthening its ability "to deter and defend itself against any threat." Israel also wants to ensure the continuation of military and economic aid, the release of advanced technology to the IDF [Israel Defense Forces], and the expansion of intelligence cooperation. The Defense Ministry proposed that the strategic agreement include a secret appendix where the United States would recognize Israel's possession of an independent deterrence "in the foreseeable future." [passage omitted]

According to reports reaching Israel, the U.S. Defense Department is not keen to sign a defense pact. The Americans will agree to issue the joint statement, which is meant to help Peres before the elections, but the ensuing deliberations will be drawn-out because the administration is in no rush to commit itself to a formal pact with Israel.

U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry, who concluded a two-day visit to Egypt yesterday, was asked whether Israel and the United States were going to sign a secret agreement that would recognize Israel's nuclear capability. News agencies quote Perry as denying this and saying that the United States does not cooperate with Israel in the nuclear arms field. "There are no contacts about a secret defense pact between Israel and the United States," Perry told reporters. Perry added: "It is not new that the United States is committed to Israel's security, but we are likewise committed to security and stability in the region, also vis-a-vis our security partners in the region, including Egypt. Any discussion of regional security must include Egypt, just as it does Israel. Egypt is a key country in the efforts to establish a lasting peace in the Middle East and to achieve more security."

Perry said that the United States will not pressure Israel into joining the Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], as demanded by Egypt. "We have always supported universal joining of the NPT, but one should acknowledge the fact that there are criminal Middle East countries, Iraq and Iran, which are trying to develop nuclear weapons. We have taken action to halt these plans, which endanger regional stability. Any regional effort to eliminate nuclear arms should include all regional countries."

In Egypt, Perry met with President Husni Mubarak and Defense Minister Muhammad Husayn Tantawi, and visited Second Army headquarters near Ismailia. Discussed in his talks were the military cooperation between Egypt and the United States, as well as a planned deal for the supply of 21 F-16's to the Egyptian Air Force, which has already purchased 160 such fighter planes.

Jordan: Former Iraqi Intelligence Chief To Reside in Amman

JN0604173596 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1700 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] General Wafiq al-Samarra'i, former chief of Iraqi Military Intelligence, who broke away from the Iraqi regime two years ago, has decided to stay in Amman, where he arrived on 4 April. The former Iraqi official, who had been residing in Damascus, did not participate in the Iraqi opposition meetings held recently in the Syrian capital.

Jordan: Information Minister Confirms al-Samarra'i in Amman

JN0604205896 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 6 Apr 96

[News conference by Jordanian Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir with unidentified correspondents in Amman on 6 April — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Mu'ashshir] His majesty the king today presided over part of the cabinet meeting. The king's statements speak for themselves. I cannot add anything to what the king said about the government and his satisfaction with its performance and policies.

Most of the cabinet session was devoted to discussing the regulations for the organization and staffing of ministries and government departments for 1996. During this session, the cabinet approved this law for the current year. I will now answer your questions.

[Correspondent] First, is it true that Jordan received Wafiq al-Samarra'i, former chief of Iraqi Intelligence, after he performed minor pilgrimage [in Saudi Arabia]? Second, what is your comment on the issue of federation — which was discussed at the Iraqi opposition conference in Damascus — particularly since it was a Jordanian proposal?

[Al-Mu'ashshir] In fact, I can confirm that al-Samarra'i is now in Amman and that he arrived in Jordan on 4 April.

Regarding the second issue, I would like to say that this is not a Jordanian proposal. What is decided by the Iraqis is purely an Iraqi affair. Federation was, and still is, one of the proposals presented by the Iraqis themselves and one of their options. They are free to make their choice.

I would like to comment here: The paradox is that talk about holding a conference for the Iraqi opposition in Amman is considered treason, but when such a conference convenes outside Amman and the Iraqis themselves reach the same conclusions, it is termed a patriotic national plan. I leave it up to you to make your own judgment.

Jordan: Al-Samarra'i 'Given Permission To Stay in Jordan'

JN0804111496 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 8 Apr 96 pp 12, 2

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—A former chief of Iraqi military intelligence has taken up residence in Jordan, becoming the second Iraqi general to be given permission to stay in Jordan in less than a month, and is likely to join an exile group opposed to the regime of Saddam Husayn, Iraqi sources said Sunday [7 April].

They said Wafiq al-Samarra'i, a general, arrived in Amman on Thursday [4 April] from Saudi Arabia after performing the 'Umrah pilgrimage, in what was seen as a serious blow to Syrian efforts to forge an anti-Saddam alliance based in Damascus to counter what the Syrians see as Jordanian efforts to gain influence in Iraq.

Jordan has denied that it has any ambition in Iraq and affirmed that its concern was to help alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people under more than five years of sweeping international sanctions against their country.

"Jordan has given the general permission to stay in the country in line with the Kingdom's policy of being a shelter for all Arabs," said a source, noting that only two weeks ago Amman gave shelter to General Nizar al-Khazraji, a former chief of staff of the Iraqi army.

Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir was quoted as saying by Reuters that Gen. al-Samarra'i "asked for permission to stay and his request was accepted."

According to Iraqi sources, Gen. al-Samarra'i, who defected to Syria in 1994 and was living in Damascus, "flew to Jordan from Saudi Arabia instead of returning to Damascus after 'Umrah."

"He feels very comfortable in Jordan, which, he believes, is in a better position to help advance the cause of the Iraqi people than any other Arab country," said the source.

According to the source, Gen. al-Samarra'i, who did not attend a meeting last week of Iraqi exile groups in Damascus that broke up in disarray over disagreement on future plans, "is likely" to announce his decision to join the Iraqi National Accord movement soon.

The Iraqi National Accord, which maintains an office in northern Iraq out of the control of the Baghdad government, describes itself as a group of former military officers living outside Iraq and serving personnel within the country as well as middle level bureaucrats.

Gen. al-Khazraji, a Shiite from southern Iraq, announced last week that he was joining the Iraqi National Accord.

Brigadier general Najib al-Salihi, who fought in the 1991 Gulf war, moved to Amman in December with the Iraqi National Accord.

"The rebasing of some Iraqi personalities to Jordan is evidence of the weight the Jordanian scene is starting to carry vis-a-vis change in Iraq," said an Arab diplomat quoted by Reuters.

The Iraqi National Accord is part of a broad opposition alliance under the umbrella of the Iraqi National Congress, but its leadership does not fully agree with the decisions of INC, according to the Iraqi sources.

Gen. al-Samarra'i's move to Jordan was seen as a setback to Syria's efforts to set up an anti-Saddam alliance based in Damascus, particularly after the failure of last week's meeting to agree on what should be the shape of a future Iraq after Saddam is toppled.

Syria launched its efforts to set up an Iraqi alliance in exile after Jordanian criticism of the Saddam regime grew stronger and the Kingdom offered shelter to Iraqi Industry Minister Husayn Kamil and his brother Saddam Kamil and their wives, both daughters of Saddam Husayn, in August 1995.

The two brothers and their wives returned to Iraq in February after Baghdad said it had pardoned them for their defection, but both of them, their father and a brother, were killed, according to Iraqi official media, by their family members who wanted to remove the stigma of defection from the clan. But many argue that the killings came upon the direct orders of the Iraqi leadership.

Gen. al-Samarra'i, who hails from a prominent Iraqi clan close to the Saddam regime, publicly supported Jordanian criticism of Baghdad's policies and the Kingdom's call for an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people in a telegram he sent to Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti in February.

Observers here speculated that Gen. al-Samarra'i's departure from Syria could prompt some other Iraqi exiles living there to follow suit. "But it is highly likely that Syria would adopt measures to ensure that none of them are able to leave the country," said an observer.

"We want a change in the Iraqi regime," a Jordanian official, who requested anonymity, told Reuters.

"But we are taking a low-profile with regard to the Iraqi opposition and we do not interfere with the political formula for a future Iraq as this is something left for the Iraqis."

Diplomats and some Iraqi sources said two rival Kurdish parties and other pro-Iranian and independent opposition groups were planning to open offices in Jordan in the next few months.

Jordan: Envoy Rejects 'Israel's Closure' of Palestinian Territories

JN0704111796 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 7 Apr 96 p 12

[Report by Caroline Faraj; "Special to the JORDAN TIMES"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Jordan's ambassador to Israel Omar al-Rifa'i on Saturday [6 April] reiterated Jordan's rejection of Israel's closure of the Palestinian lands imposed following a wave of anti-Israeli attacks in Jerusalem, Ashkelon, and Tel Aviv that left about 60 Israelis dead.

Mr. al-Rifa'i said Jordan had repeatedly voiced its rejection of the closure and support of the Palestinians at recent meetings with senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Shimon Peres, explaining that Israel was overreacting to the wave of bombings.

Mr. al-Rifa'i told the Jordan Times and al-Ra'y in an interview that he emphasised to senior Israeli officials that the peace process cannot be protected by the continuation of the closure and that any reaction to the violent bombings should not be in the form of violent measures.

As a partner in the Middle East peace process, he said, Jordan views these attacks as targeting the peace process. Thus Israel's reaction should not support such attempts.

But the ambassador, who assumed his post last month, said the peace process, which is passing through a critical stage, will recover within months at all negotiating tracks, including the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Mr. al-Rifa'i said Jordanian-Israeli relations had become now normal "just like Jordan's relations with any country in the world."

"We have begun the peace-building process after concluding all the bilateral agreements that were mentioned in the peace treaty," he said.

"But it is imperative for the two (Jordanian and Israeli) peoples to enjoy the real fruits of peace by achieving economic growth and prosperity," Mr. al-Rifa'i said.

He expressed his belief that the 29 May Israeli presidential and legislative elections will not affect Jordanian-Israeli relations, which, he said, are governed by the peace treaty. But he expressed hope that moderation will be the determining factor in the elections.

"As an embassy, we treat the Israeli Government at the present as a government and not as a representative of a party. At the same time we are in continuous contact with all representatives of the Israeli society and its Jewish and Arab parties," he said.

He noted that Israeli politicians from various parties view the peace treaty as the cornerstone in the structure of a comprehensive peace in the region.

Jordan: Amman-Tel Aviv Flights Begin 7 Apr

JN0704111196 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 7 Apr 96 p 3

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Royal Wings, Jordan's airline for short-haul flights, flies its inaugural flight to Israel today managed by Royal Jordanian (RJ), and Arkia, Royal Wing's Israeli counterpart, will begin flights to Jordan on 28 April, RJ officials said Saturday [6 April].

The flights would cut down several hours from the cumbersome overland crossings in the north and south, but initial traffic is expected to be light, officials said. However, no flight is available on Saturdays when the land borders operate only a few hours.

Royal Wings will use its Dash-8 50-seat plane for the 30-minute flights, which will take off from Marka Airport at 6:05 p.m. on Friday, Sunday Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

The return flight will be on the same day, taking off from Tel Aviv at 7.15 p.m. and landing at Queen Alia International Airport [QAIA].

The flights will have RJ numbers since "RJ will be the contractors for managing the flights for Royal Wings," a senior RJ official said.

Fares are set at $70 (one-way), $140 (roundtrip), and $120 (excursion, three to 30 days).

Similarly, the Arkia flights to and from Amman—which will use only the QAIA—will bear el-Al numbers. The aircraft will be Dash-7, with 529-seat capacity. RJ and el-Al will offer ground services to Royal Wings and Arkia in Amman and Tel Aviv on a reciprocal basis.

The Dash-8 is the only plane owned by Royal Wings and it will be used for Amman-Aqaba flights as well.

The inaugural el-Al flight to Amman will feature a boeing 757 plane, which will land at QAIA at 9:20 a.m. on 20 April. Thereafter, the Arkia flights will land at QAIA at 10 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and take off at 11:10 p.m, and land at 6:30 a.m. and take off at 7:20 a.m. on Thursday and Sunday.

The RJ official said the airline expected initial traffic to be thin on the Amman-Tel Aviv route. "But traffic should pick up as we get along the line," commented the official.

In reply to a question, the official explained that while Royal Wings is aware that operating a flight on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, when land crossings between Jordan and Israel remain closed might bring more business "we might have technical problems for handling the flights at the Tel Aviv end because of the holiday there," he noted.

Opening of air routes between Jordan and Israel is part of a transport and civil aviation agreement signed by the two countries in line with the peace treaty they entered in October 1994. The agreement also offers overflight rights for the airlines of the two countries.

Royal Jordanian flights use Israeli airspace, but el-Al is not using Jordanian airspace because it has not reached agreements with the Gulf countries on using their airspace for its flights to Asia and the Far East.

Jordan: Private Vehicle Travel Between Jordan, Israel To Begin

JN0704094696 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 7 Apr 96 p 3

[Report by Ghalya al-'Alul; "Special to the JORDAN TIMES"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Starting 28 April, Jordanians will be able to travel to Israel using their private vehicles through both Jordan valley and Wadi Araba border crossing point, Minister of Transport Nasir al-Lawzi said Saturday [6 April].

At a press conference, Mr. al-Lawzi explained in full the details of the transportation agreement which Jordan signed with Israel on 16 January, 1996 describing it as the "linchpin" of agreements signed between the two countries in implementation of the peace treaty.

He told journalists Saturday that the agreement will allow all Jordanian and Israeli cars to travel between the two countries providing that the vehicles are insured against liability in the other country.

Insurance costs for Jordanian cars, Mr. al-Lawzi said, will be JD [Jordanian dinars] 2.5 per day for cars with an engine capacity of 2000 cubic centimetres, and JD 3.4 for cards with an engine capacity of more than 2000 CC, adding that insurance costs for tour buses will be JD 6.5 per day.

The minister said Jordanians travelling to Israel should have a Jordanian or an international driving license. He added that those who have a Jordanian license should obtain a formal translation of their licenses in English from the Licensing Department.

Other formalities will be required from Jordanian travelers, Mr. al-Lawzi said, such as a valid visa which costs JD 13 per person and a three-month permit for the car subject to renewal. The permit, he said, is obtainable at the Israeli border.

Vehicles should be driven by the owners or any other person authorised by the owner, and the driver is free to choose any exit point (currently the Wadi Araba crossing point and King Husayn Bridge in the Jordan Valley) and return via the same point or the other he said.

With regard to tour buses which commenced their trips to and from Israel on 1 April through Wadi Araba and the King Husayn Bridge, Mr. al-Lawzi said the buses can only travel along their scheduled routes which are Irbid, Aqaba and Amman, adding that the Israeli roots are Tiberias, Nazareth, Hayfa, Tel Aviv and Eilat.

Buses will be allowed to stop at visiting points, hotels or tour bus stops, Mr. al-Lawzi said, noting that buses are prohibited from entering either country without passengers unless the bus is returning to transport the same group of passengers it brought in either direction.

Public transportation will start on 5 May, 1996 with two daily trips between Aqaba and Eilat at a charge of $1.5 per person and two daily trips between Amman and Tel Aviv at a charge of $7 per person, Mr. al-Lawzi said.

He added that two daily trips will also be scheduled between Amman, Nazareth and Hayfa, costing $6.5 per person between Amman and Nazareth, and $6.5 per person between Amman and Hayfa.

Trips between Irbid, Nazareth and Hayfa will be scheduled twice daily costing $4.5 per person between Irbid and Nazareth and $5 per person between Irbid and Hayfa, Mr. al-Lawzi added.

He said that transport of goods between Jordan and Israel will be allowed by transit as of June 26, 1996 on the "back to back" (transit) basis.

Special cases will be exempted from the back to back basis and will be exempted from the back to back basis and will be transported on the "door to Door" (direct) basis, such as Jordanian and Israeli trucks which load and unload imports and exports to and from Aqaba port or the Israeli ports, and agricultural products, he said.

Private vehicles carrying more than seven passengers or weighing more than four tonnes will not be allowed to travel to and from Israel, Mr. al-Lawzi said adding that car rentals, taxis, bicycles and motorcycles will also be prevented from travelling between both countries.

"The agreement will contribute to activating the trade exchange and movement between Jordan, Israel and the West Bank." Mr. al-Lawzi told reporters.

Asked about travelling procedures through the northern crossing point of Shaykh Husayn bridge, Mr. al-Lawzi said the government of Japan has granted Jordan $18 million for the establishment of a border crossing centre, adding that until the centre is built, Jordan will establish a temporary centre in the north to facilitate the movement of travelers.

Jordan: Company Announces Telephone Links With Kuwait Reestablished

LD0604145196 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic
1033 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, 6 April — The telecommunications company announced today the reestablishment of telephone links with the State of Kuwait at the previous reduced tariff.

Engineer Walid al-Duwaiq [name as transliterated], the company's director, informed KUNA by phone today of the reestablishment of the links at the previous reduced rate as from 1 April. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Chirac Says France Ready To Contribute to Security Measures

LD0504154096 Paris France-Info Radio in French 1500 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] French President Jacques Chirac paid a visit this afternoon to the general headquarters of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon. On the second day of his official visit to Lebanon, Jacques Chirac stressed that France was ready to participate in security measures that would guarantee safety on the Lebanon-Israel border.

[Begin Chirac recording] We wish that the Lebanese state would exert freely its total sovereignty over all its territory. We would like also that all the peoples of the region, including the State of Israel, could live in peace within safe and recognized borders.

France is ready, if asked by the various parties, to make its contribution to the initiatives aiming at guaranteeing, with the advent of peace, the security of the peoples living on either side of the border in southern Lebanon. [end recording]

Lebanon: Chirac Meets al-Hariri, Visits UNIFIL, Addresses Troops

NC0504171696 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1400 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Before visiting Bkirki [Maronite patriarchate seat], the French president visited the old French Embassy building in Clemenceau. He and Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri attended the signing of an agreement concerning the Higher Institute of Businesses and unveiled a commemorative plaque, inaugurating the institute. The French and Lebanese foreign ministers, Herve de Charette and Faris Buwayz, signed the agreement. The governor of the Lebanese Central Bank, Riyad Salamah, and the chairman of the French Chamber of Trade and Industry also signed an agreement to finance the institute.

Afterward Prime Minister al-Hariri and President Chirac toured the old embassy building accompanied by ministers and politicians.

Earlier President Chirac visited Museum Square, where he laid wreaths at the tomb of the unknown soldier. He was met there by Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul and the army's chief of staff, Major General Riyad Taqi-al-Din, in addition to military and state officials. [passage omitted]

At noon French President Jacques Chirac went to the home of the French ambassador in Mar Taqla, where he held a private meeting with Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri followed by a luncheon.

At 1430 President Chirac left the French ambassador's home for the B'abda Palace from where he boarded a helicopter heading for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL] headquarters in al-Naqurah to inspect the French UNIFIL contingent. He arrived there at 1550.

In a speech he stressed that France is willing to contribute to the peace process if asked by the parties concerned.

For more details, here is NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY correspondent Samir Farhat.

[Begin Farhat recording] French President Chirac landed in al-Naqurah at about 1545 to inspect the 240-man French battalion operating within UNIFIL. Chirac's visit to the south was welcomed by Lebanese officials and prominent figures for its significance reflecting French support for Lebanon and its understanding of the southerners' suffering. [passage omitted]

In his address President Chirac commemorated the 26 French soldiers killed in Lebanon and spoke about France's stance on the Lebanese situation and the peace talks. He asked: Can France remain indifferent to Lebanon's fate and its people's suffering? He said he hoped the Lebanese State would freely exercise its full sovereignty over all its territories. He added: We also want to see all the region's nations, including Israel, living in peace within safe and recognized borders. He emphasized that peace can only be established through a comprehensive agreement grouping all the countries concerned. He said France spares no effort in taking the peace negotiations to their conclusion. He added that if the parties concerned ask, France is willing to contribute to initiatives aimed at guaranteeing the security of nations living on both sides of the border in south Lebanon after peace has been achieved. [passage omitted]

President Chirac is now leaving for a meeting with [UNIFIL Commander] Wozniak at his headquarters in al-Naqurah before returning to Beirut in a helicopter. [end recording]

A short while ago French President Chirac left al-Naqurah for the B'abda Palace.

Samir Farhat has the details in this report.

[Begin Farhat recording] At about 1715 French President Jacques Chirac left al-Naqurah for Beirut aboard a UNIFIL helicopter accompanied by Foreign Minister Herve de Charette and the French ambassador to continue his official visit.

Before leaving, President Chirac addressed the French battalion in private, praising its mission here along with forces belonging to eight countries. [momentary break in transmission] ....will remain fragile before signing a peace accord. Afterward it is desirable for the Lebanese army and the Internal Security Forces to come here—the Lebanese border—to keep the peace along the border after Resolution 425 has been implemented. President Chirac decorated the French force's commander with a French medal. [passage omitted] [end recording] [passage omitted]

Lebanon: French Foreign Minister Cited on Chirac's Visit, Peace

NC0504173696 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1400 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Lebanese and French foreign ministers, Faris Buwayz and Herve de Charette, have resumed the talks they began at the B'abda Palace yesterday. They held a meeting at Minister Buwayz's home in al-Ashrafiyah at noon today in the presence of members of the French diplomatic delegation accompanying de Charette. Present on the Lebanese side were Lebanon's Ambassador to France Naji Abu-'Asi and the director of the minister's office, Ambassador Milhim Mistu. The meeting was interrupted for a luncheon hosted in honor of the French minister. [passage omitted]

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette described President Chirac's visit to Lebanon as a turning point in Lebanese-French relations and said the visit will boost the peace talks.

The French foreign minister advised his Lebanese friends, with respect for their freedom, to participate in politics and parliamentary elections, because the elections are not just a right, but are a duty. He said: If we are not present we cannot oppose or make changes. He emphasized that France is willing to give guarantees for peace through security arrangements in the south and elsewhere.

Minister de Charette's remarks were made in several meetings with journalists in Bkirki and at the Foreign Ministry.

Lebanon: Buwayz Meets French Counterpart, Comments

NC0504141496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1300 GMT 5 Apr 96

[News conference by Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz after his meeting with French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette with unidentified correspondents in Beirut on 5 April — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Buwayz] We benefited from the presence of the foreign minister, among the official French delegation, to consult on a number of issues. The most important of these is the regional situation in the wake of developments in Israel and in light of the forthcoming Israeli elections. We reviewed the eventualities that the region could face, whether the Labor Party returns to power or does not. We also discussed the French role in light of the proposal made by the French foreign minister during his recent visit to Beirut. We studied in depth the possibility of submitting this proposal when the peace process is resumed.

[Correspondent] Will this precede the signing of an agreement with Israel?

[Buwayz] Absolutely not. I believe that the French minister's proposal is a French contribution if an agreement is reached. It is a contribution at the level of the practical implementation of any peace agreement. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Addresses French President Chirac at Banquet

NC0504200496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1854 GMT 5 Apr 96

[Speech by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri at a banquet in honor of French President Jacques Chirac in Beirut—live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Your visit is testimony to Lebanon and the Lebanese people, who hold for you personally and for the French people all respect and amity. Your visit is testimony to our homeland, which is emerging from its ordeal and reexercising its human and cultural role in this region. Your visit is testimony to the great achievements the Lebanese people have realized in the past few years. They count on more support from friends, above all you personally, to enhance this renaissance and strengthen the Lebanese government reconstruction efforts. Your visit is testimony to the constitutional establishment's restoration of their normal role in an open and democratic system. [passage omitted]

We in Lebanon have always affirmed our appreciation for Syria's assistance to us in terminating the war and consolidating civil peace, which is necessary for the reconstruction and development process. We are confident of the results of our permanent coordination with Syria in the peace negotiations to liberate our occupied lands and protect our future and rights. But we also count on the support offered by friends, above all France, which has a special position and role in the EU and on the international scene.

Lebanon is not alone in looking toward France in this regard. The entire Arab world sees that President Chirac—bearer of the Gaullist banner and successor of General de Gaulle—is firmly determined to implement France's Arab policy, drawn up by the great deceased leader. This policy serves Arab and French interests alike. [passage omitted]

Not surprisingly, France has always supported Lebanon's call for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 425 and for Israel's unconditional withdrawal to the internationally recognized borders. This is because France is keen on Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. I am confident that this noble French stance is a practical translation of the principles the French people believe in and the ideals they uphold. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: French President Holds News Conference in Beirut

NC0604102796 (Clandestine) Radio Free Lebanon in Arabic 0845 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] During a news conference held at the Ba'bda palace this morning, French President Jacques Chirac expressed optimism over Lebanon's future and the peace process. He called for implementing UN resolution 425. The French president restated that France supports Lebanon's position within the context of its EU role and international relations.

President Chirac expressed the hope that the elections law will be fair and that everyone will take part in the next upcoming elections.

Our correspondent Antoine 'Isa had the following to add:

[Begin Antoine 'Isa recording] French President Jacques Chirac has reiterated France's support for Lebanon's sovereignty and independence. He expressed hope that this will be achieved and that Lebanon will regain all its traditions in coexistence and prudence. He said that France will be an important factor in the formation of a Middle East policy with the aim of establishing a region of peace, freedom, development, and stability.

Chirac restated that Lebanon's history and location enable it to play an important role in the Middle East policy. He added that France is ready to help Lebanon shoulder its responsibilities in this regard. Chirac maintained that France has the intention of playing a more important role in following up the with efforts to support the peace process. As part of France's support for the implementation of resolution 425, he declared his country's readiness to help find the border security guarantees, which will be the task of the army and internal security forces. Chirac said that this help is represented in financial, political, and economic aid and through the EU's effective role.

In response to a question about his talks with Patriarch Sfayr concerning the issue of guarantees requested by the Christian opposition for the sake of participating in the parliamentary elections next fall, Chirac said: We have dealt with these issues and with this beatitude, not because I want to interfere in Lebanon's domestic affairs, but because I share his thinking that the elections law must be fair and just. Everyone should be proportionally represented. Chirac said that the elections law will commensurate with the just demands and that all the Lebanese will be allowed to take part in the elections. This is a must in a democratic country like Lebanon. Therefore, everyone must shoulder his responsibility to consolidate democracy and the efforts of everyone in the nation's renewal.

Responding to another question about the arrival in Damascus of French envoys before his visit in Lebanon and whether this represented an entry visa to Lebanon or a recognition of the Syrian influence in Lebanon, Chirac said: In view of my feelings toward Lebanon, I do not think that I need a visa to visit Lebanon. I enter without a visa, and I will never be expelled. But some French officials exploited their presence in Damascus to convey the objectives of the visit to President Hafiz al-Asad.

During the news confertence, Chirac dealt with the relations between Lebanon and France and the need to promote these relations. He also touched on the agreements signed during the visit. Chirac also dealt with the peace process, Sharm al-Shaykh summit, and the ties to the U.S. role in the region. [end recording]

Lebanon: French President Chirac Departs for Egypt

NC0604142996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1400 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] French President Jacques Chirac concluded his three-day official visit and left Beirut at 1555 [1255 GMT] for Egypt, his second leg of tour of the Middle East. He was accorded an official send-off at Beirut airport. President Ilyas al-Hirawi, Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri, Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, ministers, and the diplomatic corps participated in the send-off ceremony.

President Chirac addressed a final word to the Lebanese people, thanking them for the hospitality accorded him. He expressed his deep feelings and friendship for

Lebanon and his support for their efforts to establish peace and achieve prosperity and enhance coexistence.

Lebanon: U.S. Asked To Evacuate Lebanese From Liberia After Fighting

NC0704164196 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1530 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz is now holding a news conference on the deteriorating situation in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. It has been learned that the Lebanese Embassy there is surrounded. Counselor Mansur al-'Abdallah and a group of Lebanese who escaped from the fighting are inside the embassy. There are reports that most members of the Lebanese community; that is, more than 1,000 Lebanese, left their homes. Minister Buwayz held extensive contacts with Counselor al-'Abdallah in the past few hours, and he requested the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon to send a ship to evacuate the Lebanese there. Minister Buwayz also contacted the Nigerian authorities, who have a peacekeeping force in Liberia, and asked them to intervene to evacuate the Lebanese who are surrounded inside the embassy.

According to the latest reports, fighting has intensified 300 meters from the embassy. There are riots in most parts of Monrovia. The fighting is taking place between the forces of Major General [Roosevelt Johnston] and the government forces led by Vice Chairman Charles Taylor. Regular communications between Monrovia and the outside world have been cut off, and shelling with light- and medium-caliber weapons has been exchanged in the streets. Most embassies were evacuated except for the embassies of the United States, China, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Egypt, and Lebanon. The Egyptian ambassador left the embassy and took refuge in the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia.

Lebanon: Further on Buwayz' Remarks on Situation in Liberia

NC0804065096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0430 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz has held consultations with the U.S. Embassy and Nigeria about evacuating Lebanese nationals from Liberia. The foreign minister restated that the Lebanese community in Liberia is fine, but noting that well over 1,000 Lebanese nationals have been forced to leave their homes and take refuge in safe places following the deterioration of the situation in Monrovia. Minister Buwayz said the Liberian capital has become a semi-isolated town and most embassies' staff have left, except for those of five embassies, including the Lebanese. The foreign minister said he had contacted the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and the Lebanese Embassy in Washington to ask if there is any U.S. ship off the Liberian coast that might extend help. He said that contacts were also held with Nigeria, which contributes to the peacekeeping force in Liberia.

Foreign Minister Buwayz held a news conference at his home last night. He said:

[Begin Buwayz recording] The situation in Monrovia deteriorated yesterday afternoon after fighting broke out between the forces of Minister Johnson and progovernment forces. The fighting developed into fierce clashes involving the use of light- and medium-caliber weapons. This rendered the capital semi-isolated. Just six embassies stayed open in the capital—the Lebanese, American, Kenyan, Sierra Leonean, Nigerian, and Chinese Embassies.

Latest reports say that over 1,000 Lebanese nationals have been forced to leave their homes and take refuge in safe places. The Lebanese Embassy is virtually besieged because the fighting is raging 300 meters from the building. The ambassador and a group of Lebanese nationals are still at the embassy.

Reports say the Lebanese community is well, in other words, there are no deaths or injuries. But the community is dispersed and there is a danger of the clashes worsening. I have held several contacts with mission chief Mansur 'Abdallah through special channels. He briefed me on the situation there. He has been instructed to remain at the embassy as long as possible, because the Lebanese Embassy is responsible for the Lebanese community and, therefore, can be evacuated only when it is certain that all the Lebanese community members are well.

We held contacts with the United States through the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and our embassy in Washington to determine whether there is a U.S. ship off the Liberian coast, should we decide to evacuate the Lebanese community. We also contacted the Nigerian authorities, which has a deterrent or peace force there. We made direct contact with the force commander in Monrovia. Some prominent Lebanese expatriates joined in the contacts. [end recording]

Lebanon: Workers Union Head—Government Reveals Autocratic Mentality

NC0404211696 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1615 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Leading figures in the General Workers Union, deputies, and other political figures who assembled in the Union's headquarters, were today prevented from heading to the Chamber of Deputies to stage a sit-in.

The Union's Chairman Ilyas Abu-Rizq said: If we wanted to express the pain we feel, the government wanted to reveal the approach it is pursuing and the oppressive decisions it is making.

He added: Once again the government demonstrated its autocratic mentality that respects no laws or even the Constitution. The orders it gave today to the security authorities turned the headquarters of the workers union into a detention camp for deputies, party leaders and members, members of the workers union, and journalists. This shows the government's approach on all the issues that concern the country, particularly the workers and their demands and living conditions.

Syria: Al-Ahmar Blames Israel for Stalled Peace Talks

JN0704194596 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1450 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Speech by 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, assistant secretary general of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, at a rally marking the Ba'th Party's 49th anniversary in Damascus — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Comrades, brothers, sisters, Ba'th Party strugglers, masses of our militant nation, esteemed audience: On 7 April every year, we celebrate the anniversary of the establishment of our great party, the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party [ASBP] [applause and slogans] whose foundation in springtime symbolized the renewal of life, renaissance and beginning. [passage omitted]

Comrades, esteemed audience: The construction process in Syria, with all its implications and achievements and on all its humanitarian, political, cultural, economic, and social levels, represents a creative application of the ASBP ideology and the thoughts of comrade struggler President Hafiz al-Asad [applause and slogans].

This process is also a model that explains and emphasizes the ASBP's concepts and perceptions regarding the Arabs' future and their aspired great state. Such a state is the main objective of the Arabs. The ASBP is a pan-Arab party in terms of ideology, organization, form, and content [applause and slogans].

The Ba'th Party's ideas reflect the aspirations of the Arab masses. Its pan-Arab organizations are struggling in the Arab arena. The Ba'th Party persistently asserts that pan-Arab existence is a natural right and that Arab affairs will only be put in order by achieving great unity. Such unity is an acknowledgement of the Arabs' natural right and interest as an Arab nation that has an effective and distinguished civilized and humanitarian role. Arab unity should be the objective that steers any Arab move, and the basic yardstick by which all policies and tendencies are measured. [passage omitted]

Despite all its negative aspects, the current situation shows that the Arabs are facing common crucial issues as well as common dangers and challenges that are threatening their present and future. This makes it incumbent on the Arabs to enhance their cooperation and solidarity in a world where only large groupings can be influential and enjoy good status. Such groupings possess the components with which they can prove themselves. The nations that manage to close ranks and enhance cohesion can be influential in this world. [passage omitted]

Under the current circumstances, Arab existence requires collective Arab confrontation of the common challenges whether on the level of pan-Arab development, Middle Easternism, or other projects designed to eliminate pan-Arabism and control the Arabs and their destiny.

Before it is too late, we warn of the real threats posed by these projects which are proposed as part of the schemes of control, expansion, and domination of the region and its destiny. These projects aim to remove from the Arab mind the idea of unity as a joint crucial link as well as to entrench and weaken the existing entities as a prelude to fragmenting them from within and uprooting Arabism. Without doing so, these projects and schemes cannot achieve their objectives. [passage omitted]

Esteemed audience: Peace is Syria's strategic option. Leader al-Asad persistently declared this on all occasions. However, it should be real peace and not a delusion. It should be a just and comprehensive peace, which will return rights to their owners, end the aggression and occupation, and open the scopes of progress, development, and prosperity for the peoples and states in the region in an atmosphere of security and stability.

Such peace has clear implications. It is the antithesis of aggression and occupation, so it can only be established after the removal of aggression and occupation. Syria has persistently exerted every effort to achieve such peace, stemming from its adherence to the peace process and its eagerness to remove the obstacles facing this process and achieve its sought objectives. Syria, however, will not bow to any pressures and will not submit to any blackmail which seeks to have it change its clear and forceful stand. It will not give up any inch of its territory or any Arab right.

Logic, rationality, reality, international laws, and the bases of the peace process launched at the Madrid conference dictate that the achievement of the desired peace based on related resolutions of international legitimacy and the exchange of land for peace requires a full withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967 and the recognition of legitimate Arab rights.

Coordination and cooperation between Syria and Lebanon is continuously reinforced in order to achieve this peace and stand against the occupation. This is also being done in order to deepen cooperation between the two fraternal countries in all fields as well as reinforce the national unity of the fraternal Lebanese people and Lebanon's resurgence toward building its future and restoring its effective role among the ranks of its Arab nation. [slogans and applause]

Syria works to confront Israel's attempts to penetrate the Arab house while the region is still far from peace, and while Israel continues to entrench its occupation and aggressive measures.

Comrades and esteemed audience: All developments and events confirm the soundness of Syria's stand and add to the strength and firmness of this stand. These developments confirm the irrationality of Israel's attempts to evade real peace whether through procrastination, intransigence, freezing the peace process, or offering separate solutions as alternatives that secure Israel's interest at the expense of the Arabs' rights and interests. These developments also show how irrational are Israel's attempts to distance the region from peace, reinforce terrorist practices and war crimes against the Palestinian Arab people, the people of Lebanon, and the kinsfolk in occupied Golan, or to carry out practices and policies that strengthen the hotbeds of violence and counterviolence, and arrange for emotional conferences and meetings aimed at diverting the world's attention from the real causes and motives of violence.

Mixing terrorism with legitimate resistance to occupation is an intentional move, whose objective is to justify aggression and divert attention from the occupation. The Sharm al-Shaykh summit is a clear example of how far one can go in supporting the occupation which has been weighing heavily on the Arabs for many decades. This summit was not a peacemakers summit, as they wanted to depict it, for the summit did not deal with occupation which is the main cause of violence and counterviolence. It also did not deal with the continuous Israeli acts of terrorism in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan, and southern Lebanon. The summit did not discuss the Israeli intransigence which is the reason for the suspension of negotiations and the obstruction of the peace process. This summit came to serve Israel and its hostile stands, and to give it a cover to enable it to perpetrate more war crimes and acts of terrorism against the Arabs through the policy of collective punishment and violation of the Arab human rights in the occupied territories. [applause and slogans]

Israel is responsible for the suspension of the peace negotiations and for the foundering and retrogadation of the peace process. By insisting on security considerations without discussing the issue of occupation, Israel intentionally forgets that occupation and security cannot meet, and that if it really wants security for itself and others it must abide by the dictates of the peace process in words and deeds. Israel must also give up nuclear weapons and liberate the region from these weapons which now threaten nuclear leakage, not to mention the well-known threats these weapons pose to the security and stability of the region.

The perils posed by Israel's nuclear weapons become more emphasized now with the possible nuclear leakage from the Dimona reactor which threatens the entire region with a very serious catastrophe. The international community and the influential parties within it, which have for a long time closed their eyes to Israel's nuclear weapons production are also to blame for this threat as their stand has been interpreted as encouragement to Israel to go on with this serious work.

The Arabs must now set as one of their priorities the initiation of an active and effective Arab and international move whose immediate aim is to place the Israeli installations under international supervision, as is the case with the other countries in the world. Its aim in the not too distant future will be the formulation of an international plan to completely eliminate nuclear weapons from the region. [passage omitted]

Syria: Paper Says Turkish-Israeli Pact Poses 'Threat' to Syria

JN0704054896 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0450 GMT 7 Apr 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] TISHRIN today comments on the Turkish-Israeli military agreement, which was disclosed two days ago. Under the agreement, the Turkish Government will allow Israeli warplanes to overfly Turkish airspace and use Turkish airports.

The paper says this agreement is a serious development in the political situation in the region. The agreement will be an element of tension and instability and will encourage Israel to pursue its aggressive and expansionist policy. Certainly, this agreement does not serve the objectives of the Turkish people. It conflicts with their interests.

The paper asks: What is the interest of the Turkish people in allowing Israeli warplanes to be used for spying operations, and even aggression against Turkey's neighbors?

TISHRIN adds: No matter how hard the Turkish Government tries to cover up for and market this agreement, it poses a threat to the security of Syria, the Arabs, and all the Islamic countries. The agreement is also an aggression against Turkey's sovereignty and a flagrant challenge to the feelings of the Muslim Turkish people who see their government extend facilities to those who occupy holy Jerusalem and practice suppression and terrorism against Arabs and Muslims everywhere.

The paper concludes: Establishing closer ties with Israel means that Turkey will be within the circle of fire and tension which is ignited by Israel in this region. Turkey will be the first loser. Damascus asserted its eagerness to establish good and cordial relations with Turkey and create a positive climate to resolve all outstanding problems between the two countries. Providing this climate is the responsibility of both sides. So far, the steps taken by the Turkish Government do not help create a relaxation in Syrian-Turkish relations. On the contrary, these steps create more problems.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Government Forces Repulse Taleban Attack on Kabul

LD0504195696 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Last night the Islamic Army repulsed a two-pronged Taleban attack. Quoting an armed forces source, BAKHTAR reported that last night the Taleban group launched a large-scale attack from the western and southern directions of Kabul. In a successful defense, the units of the Islamic Army repulsed the Taleban invasion and inflicted heavy losses on them.

In [word indistinct] and Koh-e Qurom areas, from where last night's attack was launched, many Taleban corpses can be seen. The Taleban group also sustained heavy losses in the south of Kabul and in the Reshkhor area. A mojahed fighter on the front line said that this attack was doomed to failure from the beginning because the Taleban fighters started the attack without having any interest in the fighting.

Our correspondent says that this attack coincided with the ending of faked meeting in Kandahar. The Taleban leaders had attached great hopes to this assault.

According to another report, today the Taleban group, after last night's defeat, fired rockets on residential areas of Kabul city, killing four people and injuring another five people. A number of residential buildings also sustained damage.

Afghanistan: Group Calls Taleban Decision 'Inopportune'

LD0604205396 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday, an extraordinary session of the High Coordination Council was held under the chairmanship of Sebghatollah Mojeddedi to discuss the current situation in the country. A Radio Message of Freedom correspondent reported to us that the session described the Kandahar meeting as inopportune and considers the selection by the meeting of a such a person as Amir al-Momenin as an act playing with the fate of the Afghan people. It was said during the session that conspiracies such as Kandahar would further prolong the current problems in the country.

Afghanistan: Government Says 14 Taleban Killed in Artillery Battle

BK0604093196 Hong Kong AFP in English 0907 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, April 6 (AFP) — Fourteen Taleban warriors were killed in an intense artillery and rocket battle with Afghan government troops south of besieged Kabul, defence ministry officials said Saturday [6 April].

The militiamen died under intense cannon and rocket barrages from the government side during a firefight which lasted most of Friday, the officials and frontline officers told AFP.

"Our artillery hit Taleban posts and troops during the skirmish, killing 14 of them according to intelligence reports," a defence official claimed.

No independent confirmation of the Taleban death toll could be obtained from here as the road linking the two opposing front lines has been sealed to all traffic. The government frequently reports scores of Taleban killed in action.

Government commanders in charge of battlefield posts and local residents confirmed however, that both warring factions pounded each other's positions with heavy weapons for about eight hours on Friday.

"The battle was extremely fierce and broke out after we noticed the Taleban trying to bring two tanks up onto a hill south of Kabul which would have threatened the city," Colonel Mohammed Ghulam said.

"We prevented the movement, but the enemy then opened fire on us with their heavy weapons, started an exchange which intensified when they tried to fire rockets on Kabul from mobile launchers," he added.

Despite the heavy (?exchanges), which could be heard here throughout the day, ground troops were not deployed on the frontline at Rish Khvor, eight kilometers (five miles) from Kabul's southern suburbs, commanders said.

Artillery skirmishes and bombing raids occur on Kabul's most active frontline on a daily basis, although no major push by either side has taken place for months.

The Kabul administration is fending off the Taleban — who have vowed to topple the government and seize the city — who have been encamped on three major fronts around the embattled capital for six months.

The militiamen, who rose from the Koranic schools of Pakistan 18 months ago, last week declared a holy war

— or Jihad — on the Kabul government and repeated a pledge not to negotiate with its officials.

The Taleban control about half of the war-torn country and have said they intend to impose Islamic Sharia law over the whole country after conquering it.

Afghanistan: Government Forces Bomb Taleban Sites

LD0604174196 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Air Force bombers bombed the concentration areas and fortifications of Benazir Bhutto's Taleban in retaliation for their rocket attacks on Kabul [word indistinct]. BAKHTAR told us that last night and today, Taleban bombarded residential areas of Kabul as a result of which five people were martyred and 17 others injured.

In retaliation for the attacks, Air Force bombers bombed Taleban concentration areas and fortifications in the south of Kabul this afternoon. No report has been received about the loss of life inflicted on Taleban.

The artillery units of the Islamic Army also bombarded, last night and today, the [words indistinct] to the southwest of Kabul. As a result a number of people were killed or injured.

Afghanistan: Taleban Rocket Attack on Kabul Kills 7 People

LD0704161996 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1430 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Seven people have been martyred in Kabul as a result of a rocket attack by the Taleban. BAKHTAR reports that overnight and today the Taleban fired 28 rockets into residential and densely populated areas in Kabul. As a result seven Kabul residents were martyred and nine others were injured. Two women and two children were among those martyred in the rocket attacks. Kabul hospitals report that a large number of other wounded people were released after receiving treatment.

According to another report, as a result of bombing by air force bombers, 12 Taleban were killed and a large number were injured yesterday in the south of Kabul. As a result of the attacks... [short break in reception] ...were destroyed and those who man them were killed.

Afghanistan: State Council Says Kandahar Meeting Not 'Islamic'

LD0704182396 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1530 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The High State Council insisted during its meeting today that the Kandahar meeting, which was inspired by foreigners, was not an Afghan and Islamic meeting. There was no representative of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan at the meeting.

The secretariat of the High State Council has reported to us that a meeting of the council was held today under the chairmanship of esteemed Prof Borhanoddin Rabbani, president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The session discussed recent developments in the country and condemned the groups which cause chaos and disruption in the country. It was said during the meeting that the Kandahar meeting was held under the military occupation of the region, thus it could not represent the people's will and wishes, and that it was an insult to religious scholars and the people of our country. Using the title of Amir al-Momenin is an example of this group's ignorance. This puppet and ignorant group, which acts on the instructions of aliens, is even unaware of the basic principles of Islam.

Since an Islamic regime, achieved as a result of the brave Afghan people's holy war, has been established in the country, any obstruction of it is a rebellion against the Islamic sovereignty and perpetrators of such an obstruction are Mobah ul-Dam [people whose killing would not be prosecuted].

Recent developments, the readiness of the Islamic state to hold talks with all parties involved and ways to achieve peace were discussed during the session. The High State Council also expressed support for the UN peace proposals on a solution to the current problems.

Other issues on the agenda were also discussed at today's session and decisions made on each item.

India

India: Government To Back Taiwan Membership in WTO, Other Bodies

BK0804054396 Madras THE HINDU in English 5 Apr 96 p 6

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Government has assured support to Taiwan in its bid to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral organisations.

This was conveyed to the visiting Taiwanese delegation by the Commerce Secretary, Mr. Tejendra Khanna, while inaugurating the fourth meeting of the India-Taiwan joint business cooperation committee, organised jointly by the FICCI [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry] and ASSOCHAM [Associated Chamber of Commerce] here today.

Earlier, Mr. Jeffrey L.S. Koo, one of the top industrialists from Taiwan and the founder Chairman of the Indo-Taiwan joint business cooperation committee, had urged India's support for Taiwanese membership in UN organisations.

Mr. Vinod Khanna, Director General, India Taipei Association, said a few Taiwanese investment proposals are In the pipeline. "The money which is being committed to India by the Taiwanese are several times more than the total investment made by Taiwan over the years in India," he added. Incidentally, Taiwan has foreign exchange reserves of $95 billions, which it wants to invest in third countries.

Mentioning that the 50-member delegation from Taiwan, consisting of top industrialists and importers and exporters, has set a new landmark in the Indo-Taiwan economic relationship, Mr. Khanna said the auto sector, floriculture, agriculture and electronics provided considerable interest to Taiwanese businessmen.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Koo, who is also the Chairman of the China Trust Bank, said that to facilitate trade and investment between the two countries. It would be desirable to have a double taxation avoidance treaty and an investment guarantee agreement between India and Taiwan.

Mr. Fei Lung Chen, chairman of the India Committee, Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce (CNAIC), said that since the formation of the council, the setting up of the China Trust Bank today would provide a fillip towards developing the trading relationship between the two countries. India and Mainland China have been regarded as places of potential investments.

India: Proposed 'Growth Triangle' With Thailand, Sri Lanka Hailed

BK0804003896 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 6 Apr 96

[Commentary by Deb Prakash]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India has been making a major bid in the past couple of years to break its international economic isolation by forging new alliances and consolidating some of the existing links. It has recently accepted the proposal put forward by Thailand to set up a growth triangle involving India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. This is considered to be an important development in the context of India's recent efforts to play a more active role in South and Southeast Asia. Efforts in the last few years to get closer to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, have resulted in India's elevation from ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner to a full dialogue partner. South Asia, too, has been able to forge a preferential trading arrangement of its own and the seven SAPTA [South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement] members have recently held further trade negotiations in Colombo for realizing the goal of SAFTA, South Asian Free Trade Area.

The new initiative of economic alliance of India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand is proposed to be given a thrust shortly. In fact, the idea of forging an economic alliance between India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar [Burma], and Bangladesh was first mooted at Bangkok in January this year when Indian External Affairs Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee went there to take part in the joint commission meeting. The growth triangle concept involving these five countries was based on a study by the Asian Development Bank, which had predicted vigorous economic rejuvenation in the region provided these countries worked together. While Sri Lanka and India reacted positively to the proposal put up by Thailand, Bangladesh and Myanmar did not respond very positively. During this visit to Bangkok, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee made a forceful plea for a partnership between governments and businessmen in jointly developing economic synergies between contiguous areas of member states which the ASEAN growth triangles and quadrangles represented.

Since Thailand, along with Singapore, was the foremost ally to lobby for the inclusion of India in the select club of full dialogue partners, it is hardly a surprise that Thailand should seek to establish closer ties with India in the economic sphere, and through India with the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] countries in general. As far as economic ties between Thailand and India are concerned, they are now on the upswing. Bilateral trade has already crossed $1 billion and is well on its way toward the target of $2 billion by the end of the year. There are currently 20 joint ventures and Thailand enjoys the status of third largest foreign investor in India. Opportunities are opening in areas such as food processing, agriculture, electronics, and software and information technology business. Similarly, there is considerable enthusiasm on the part of the Indian business sector to increase trade with and investment in Thailand.

As regard Sri Lanka, India's exports have gone up from $425 million last year to $501 million this year.

However, the balance of trade has tilted more in India's favor than in the case of Thailand, which is not surprising considering the trying time Sri Lanka is facing at present. The growth triangle, therefore, will come as a welcome bit of good news to Sri Lanka and India, especially since these two countries seek cooperation and collaboration, including international trade and investment for human resource development, tourism promotion, agriculture, fisheries, transport, and other infrastructural arrangements. What is happening is the stress on the joint interests of the three nations, so that any initiative undertaken will be of mutual benefit.

Thus, beginning of India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Subcontinent Economic Cooperation, ISTSEC, is a major development in the region.

India: Islamabad TV Reports Kashmir Violence, Human Rights Protest

BK0604160796 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Geneva, the Kashmir human rights delegation has presented a memorandum to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, calling upon them to undertake urgent action to stop India's unchecked reign of terror in the held territory. The Kashmiri delegation also provided documentary proof along with the memorandum regarding large-scale and grave human rights violations by India in occupied Kashmir. The members were apprised of the circumstances of the murder of the well-known Kashmiri human rights activist Jalil Andrabi by Indian troops.

Meanwhile, Kashmiri leaders and a number of human rights organizations staged a demonstration in New Delhi protesting over the deteriorating human rights situation in occupied Kashmir. PTV special correspondent Ghulam Nabi Khayal reports from New Delhi:

[Begin recording] Several Indian human rights organizations staged a demonstration here in New Delhi and submitted a representation before the Supreme Court of India. The demonstrators were demanding a judicial inquiry into the custodial killing of a Kashmir lawyer and human rights activist, Jalil Andrabi, whose body was recovered from River Jhelum in Srinagar last week. The demonstrators also called for an end to the atrocities being committed in Kashmir Valley by the Indian security forces against innocent Kashmiri people. They represented human rights organizations including Citizens for Democracy, Gandhi Peace Foundation, and People's Union for Civil Liberties. The demonstrators included journalists, writers, filmmakers, and other intellectuals.

Meanwhile, the people of Kashmir have reiterated their decision of boycotting the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the state. At a mammoth congregation at Jami' Masjid [principal mosque] in Srinagar Friday, the proposed elections were described as a mockery of democracy and to be conducted without any participation of the people. [end recording]

And impervious to world opinion, Indian troops carried out more inhuman operations in the held valley. A number of Kashmiris were martyred by troops, mostly in custody. Five Kashmiris were martyred in custody in Pampur alone. Their bodies were found about 5 km from Pampur. Extensive crackdowns were carried out in Badgom, Srinagar, and Islamabad. Houses were ransacked, women molested, and a number of innocent people taken into custody. Mujahideen reacted by blasting a military vehicle at Badgom in Badgom area, and those aboard were either killed or injured. Muhajideen launched a rocket attack on a military camp at Chaodora in Badgom, killing and injuring a number of troops.

India: Commentary Views Pakistan's Efforts 'To Malign' India

BK0804052196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Commentary by Samuel Ved]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan's renewed efforts to malign India at the 52nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva yesterday received yet another blow when several countries clearly told Islamabad to stop its terrorist activities in Kashmir. Among these countries were Japan, Russia, and Nepal. Leaders of these countries human rights organizations while participating in a seminar organized as a part of the ongoing human rights commission's meeting told Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism in Kashmir. They said they favored all efforts aimed at restoring normalcy in that state.

Leader of the Japanese team, (Professor Ginay Himuchi), called on Pakistan to desist from helping terrorism not only in Kashmir but also in Afghanistan. He warned that terrorism was a double-edged weapon, which could harm even Pakistan. Russian representative, (Dr. Datiana Shomian), was of the opinion that past six years have been devastating for the people of Kashmir. She accused Pakistan of interfering in a state, which belonged to India. Similarly, the representative of Nepal also sounded a note of caution for Pakistan. The seminar on human rights focus on South Asia clearly reflected a general opinion among human rights experts in Geneva that while discussing human rights, the role of militants cannot be overlooked. This opinion had begun crystallizing last year at the UN human rights subcommission meeting after the brutal killing of a Norwegian tourist by Al-Faran in Kashmir. Until then, a general trend was to condemn security forces who protected innocent civilians from the attack of militants.

In the past six years, many human rights activists were taken for a ride by Pakistan about the real situation in Kashmir. It openly supported terrorist groups in Kashmir and when they were punished by the security forces, it tried to mislead international opinion saying that it was a case of human rights violation. That Pakistan's own friends have seen through its game plan is established by the fact that countries like Iran and China have refused to stand by it on the question of Kashmir. They no more support Pakistan's version of the right of self-determination as they see in it a conspiracy aimed at destabilizing settled regions.

Many Muslim countries, including Egypt, have complained that Pakistan soil was being used for training and arming Muslim fundamentalists to destabilize governments in their own countries. Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan is well known, although it has not stirred the international community enough. India has been trying hard to restore peace and normalcy in Kashmir through elections. Pakistan has been opposing any effort, which would bring peace in the valley. It claims that elections are not an alternative to the UN resolutions on Kashmir. This is Pakistan's new logic, apparently to justify its support to militancy in Kashmir.

India: Prime Minister Interviewed on Kashmir, Pakistan Ties

BK0804055796 Hong Kong FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW in English 11 Apr 96 pp 20-21

["Excerpts" of an interview with Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao by regional editor V.G. Kulkarni; place and date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Kulkarni] There's a feeling abroad that while the rest of the world is moving on, India and Pakistan keep on fighting over Kashmir, which in turn is eroding their economic progress. India accuses Pakistan and Pakistan blames India.

[Rao] We have no illusions on this subject. We have to live with the situation and cope with it. There is a realization among most observers that the situation in Kashmir is changing. Compared to three, four years ago, the situation has vastly improved in Kashmir. While dealing with militancy on one side, we have proceeded to normalize on a wider front. We have announced parliamentary elections and Kashmir will elect representatives along with the rest of the country. We will also hold polls for the state assembly later.

[Kulkarni] What about Pakistan's charges of human-rights violations in the Kashmir valley and of Indian discrimination against Muslims?

[Rao] Let us take a look at what is happening to Muslims in Pakistan itself. If there are human-rights violations in Kashmir or in any other part of India, we have put in place mechanisms to deal with them. If Pakistan thinks that it has taken the custodianship of the Muslim interests, what are they doing to their own Muslims? We in India have created a secular polity and not a communal state. Religion is no qualification or disqualification in our country. The partition of India in 1947 has left a particular legacy; but as generations change, the shadow of partition on our societies and politics is receding. Already the change is palpable.

Riots and unrest are part of a developing country but the causes may not always be communal — there have been far fewer riots on communal issues in the recent past. It is not a question of religion that we have to deal with but with poverty and economic progress. It is here that our anti-poverty programmes will make the difference.

[Kulkarni] Is it true that India is not agreeable to a dialogue with Pakistan, especially to discuss Kashmir?

[Rao] That is totally incorrect. On the day Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was elected to office, in my congratulatory letter I proposed talks on all issues without preconditions. We later gave Pakistan some "non-papers" or nonbinding proposals asking for discussions on some outstanding issues. Our approach is that of the long-term resolution of problems; we need to address all issues. Now, whether you want to take up the most difficult problem first or create a climate conducive for eventually resolving the most difficult problem, it is a matter of one's approach. I had six rounds of talks with her predecessor and in every one of them we extended the hand of friendship and reiterated our intention to resolve all outstanding issues. We need to continue the dialogue rather than block it.

[Kulkarni] Any third-party mediation?

[Rao] When we are ready for unconditional talks, where is the need for mediation? We have the Simla agreement providing for direct negotiations; you can pick up the threads anytime and discuss all issues including Kashmir. One gets the feeling that Pakistan is interested in internationalizing the situation for its own reasons. Raising the Kashmir issue in various international forums has become a habit with Pakistan but not many countries are interested in that anymore. Internationalization of the subject has brought Pakistan no dividends.

[Kulkarni] What of the fears over Hindu fundamentalism advocated by the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]? Is secularism under threat?

[Rao] You can't wish away certain forces not only in this country but also in Pakistan or anywhere else. Secularism in this country is the basis of the state and we in the Congress and other non-BJP parties have been fighting the communal forces. While aberrations will be there, there are continuous efforts to prevent the communal virus from being injected deep into the people's psyche. If that happens, everything will be lost. Fire-eaters will have to be controlled, not only in India.

[Kulkarni] The United States is concerned over nuclear proliferation, and assumes the two sides are on the nuclear threshold.

[Rao] What have the others to show on the disarmament front? Five nuclear countries want to preserve their dominance. We have always advocated a step-by-step approach to eliminate nuclear weapons but within a definite time frame. The recent indefinite extension of NPT [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty], which is an imperfect treaty in itself, has sent a wrong-message. It reflects an attitude to nuclear proliferation that is not only wrong but also an attempt to maintain the privileged positions of a few. As to the threshold issue, it is ridiculously exaggerated.

[Kulkarni] India is seen as pursuing hegemony.

[Rao] It is a misperception created by the state of Pakistan for their own reasons. We are not obsessed with Pakistan. I am dealing with my own problems. In India, Pakistan is not a domestic issue but one notices a contrary situation in Pakistan.

[Kulkarni] What are the prospects of trade between the two countries?

[Rao] It is not just trade but also the totality of economic, political, cultural cooperation we have to look at. We have established the South Asian Free Trade Area. There are 600-700 items for free trade and it provides the nucleus. All of us should take advantage of this. But how do you expect trade to develop when Pakistan does not even allow the exchange of artists? We need to develop the most vital of all relations-people-to-people contacts.

India: Commentary Welcomes Election Process in Kashmir

BK0504132896 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 5 Apr 96

[Commentary by Prakash Nanda, special correspondent of THE TIMES OF INDIA]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It has increasingly been obvious that despite the nefarious designs of Pakistan to the contrary, the people of Jammu and Kashmir will send their representatives to the Indian parliament in the forthcoming elections. There were unmistakable signs that the Pakistani ISI [Inter Service Intelligence] had an important role in the recent incidents at the Hazratbal shrine where the terrorists had tried to desecrate the holy place which they had forcibly occupied and later threatened from an adjacent building to do the same. This action along with many others including the regular firing from the side of Pakistan near the Line of Actual Control have been aimed at foiling New Delhi's move to conduct elections in the state. In fact, the Benazir Bhutto regime has already vowed not to allow a peaceful election in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan, it is clear, is afraid that the whole international community will realize the folly of systematic disinformation campaign that the people of the state want to secede from India once elections to the parliament in the state are held.

Three facts need to be mentioned in this regard. First and foremost is the fact that the people of Jammu and Ladakh comprising nearly half of the state's population and inhabiting about 90 percent of the state's land area are insisting on the revival of the political process. In fact, they have been complaining as to why the fundamental right to vote and have a government of their choice had been denied to them for so long.

Secondly, even within the valley of Srinagar, which is the main center of disturbance with the Pakistani help, there are 600,000 Gujjars, 300,000 Pundits, 150,000 Sikhs and non-Kashmiris, more than 100,000 of Shias and Bakarwals, the Dads and the Baltis who among them constitute nearly half of the population. It is only among the 1.3 million Sunnis in the valley that one finds the elements having links with Pakistan or shouting for the so-called azadi [freedom]. Why is it that the international community should be sensitive to the demands of some Sunnis in the valley as against the interest of others who consider themselves as parts and parcels of the Indian mainstream?

Thirdly, even among these 1.3 million, there is the Muslim Mojahedin group led by Ghulam Nabi Azad whose writ in some parts of south Kashmir, including Anantnag town, went unchallenged is favorably disposed toward the elections. [sentence as heard] Then there are leaders like Kuka Paray of the Ikhwanul Muslimeen who have been fighting with a great degree of success with Jamaati militants who are nothing but ISI sponsored terrorists. All this is not to suggest that there are no problems in Kashmir, but then problems are there everywhere. In a democracy like India, problems need to be solved through negotiations among the people's representatives and the government. It is in this task that Jammu and Kashmir needs people's representatives to talk to and they only would emerge through elections. Many in this regard view that the elections will not make any sense since the state's biggest political party, the National Conference, led by Farooq Abdullah is not participating since its demand for New Delhi agreeing to restore Kashmir's pre- 1953 status has not been agreed to. But, then the fact remains that the National Conference during the past six years had lost contact with the common mass of the state. It wanted the autonomy package so that it could go to the people for seeking their support saying that it had been fighting for their cause.

Filing of nearly 100 nominations for six seats from the state indicate the positive feelings of the people of the state toward this election. People of the state now want to give reins of power for governing themselves into the hands of their own representatives. The three national parties — Congress, BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and Janata Dal besides the (?state's) Panther's Party along with several independents including some former militants have filed their nominations. After the date of withdrawal, final picture will emerge. But there is no doubt that people of the state are now determined to give peace and democracy a chance. For this, they are ready to face small obstacles which Pakistan wants to create in the shape of increased insurgency in some parts of the valley with a view to thwart the elections.

India: BJP, Allies To Field 527 Candidates for Lok Sabha Elections

BK0804035296 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] has decided to withdraw its candidates from Behrampur in Orissa and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. The party spokesman, Mr. K.R. Malkani, said this while talking to reporters in New Delhi today.

[Begin recording] [Malkani, in progress] ... for Behrampur has withdrawn. We want that one should (?gain) real good fight. That's why we have withdrawn this candidate from Behrampur.

[Unidentified reporter] You are supporting whom then?

[Malkani] We will await and let the concerned party contact us, then we will consider matter in consultation with the state unit. [end recording]

The party spokesman said the BJP is fielding 527 candidates along with its allies. Four hundred and seventy-seven candidates will contest on the BJP symbol and 20 on the Shiv Sena symbol. Twenty-six seats have been left for the BJP's ally, the Samata Party, and four for the Haryana Vikas Party.

India: Party Expels 3 Leaders for Contesting Kashmir Elections

BK0804035096 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference has expelled three of its senior leaders for violating the party's decision not to contest the forthcoming polls. They include the former speaker, Babu Permanand.

The Jammu and Kashmir governor, General K.V. Krishna Rao, has expressed his resolve to conduct free and fair elections in the state. Addressing a meeting of candidates for the Jammu and Udhampur constituencies, he cautioned them against the attempts of militants and Pakistan agencies to communalize the situation.

India: Bharatiya Janata Party Releases Election Manifesto

BK0704162896 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A strong and secure India, a debt free economy, a riot free society, and a clean administration are promised by the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] if voted to power in the Lok Sabha elections. In the 80-page manifesto released in New Delhi today, the party president, Mr. L.K. Advani, says a qualitatively new chapter in the governance of the country will be provided.

On security, the manifesto promises tough deterrent laws against terrorists and a free hand to the security forces in Kashmir to deal with supply of men and arms from Pakistan. Promising free elections in Jammu and Kashmir after terrorism is brought under control, the manifesto has proposal for creation of regional councils for Jammu and Ladakh.

On illegal migration from Bangladesh, it proposes deportation and declaring all property deals between Indians and illegal immigrants as null and void.

On defense, the BJP manifesto says it will set up a national security council and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons. Promising to link defense expenditure to real requirements, the party says it will upgrade the conventional weapon systems.

On economic matters, the BJP promises deregulation and confining the public sector only to sensitive areas. Foreign investment will be encouraged only in infrastructure, high tech areas, and in the export sector. The exit policy will be allowed for industry if it fulfills corresponding obligations toward labor.

On minorities issues, the BJP says it will disband the Minorities Commission and entrust its responsibilities to the National Human Rights Commission. It will also ban foreign funds for religious organizations and set up special courts for trial of those accused in communal riots.

Other promises include construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, 33 percent reservation of seats for women in all elected bodies, and a uniform Civil Code to give women property rights.

Iran

Iran: President Hashemi-Rafsanjani Receives Kuwaiti Minister

LD0604103696 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jasim Muhammad al-'Awn; Kuwaiti communications, electricity, and water minister; was received by President Hashemi-Rafsanjani today. After submitting the Kuwaiti amir's best wishes to the president, he described his talks with our country's political and economic officials as most useful and constructive. The Kuwaiti communications minister said: Kuwait intends to establish more extensive ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran. We hope bilateral ties will pave the way for the expansion of all-around cooperation between the two countries.

Muhammad al-'Awn, thanking Iran for its principled stance vis-a-vis the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, said: The Government and people of Kuwait will never forget that principled stance.

At the meeting, the president stressed Iran's efforts to expand its ties and political, economic, and cultural cooperation with its neighbors in the Persian Gulf region, and said: Iran seeks to strengthen its ties with its Islamic and Arab neighbors, including Kuwait, for Islamic and spiritual interests and not because of material interest.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani considered the Islamic Republic of Iran to be a friendly and cooperative country for the Persian Gulf regional states and said: Iran possesses excellent resources and capability to help the economic prosperity of the region, and Iran's presence in regional technical and economic projects will play an important role in reducing their expenses.

Iran: Iranian, Kuwaiti Ministers Sign Memorandum of Understanding

LD0604145596 Tehran IRNA in English 1424 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 6, IRNA — Iran and Kuwait are keen on expanding their cooperation in the areas of transportation and telecommunications.

Based on a memorandum of understanding, inked here Saturday [6 April] by roads and transportation minister 'Ali Akbar Torkan and Kuwaiti Minister of Communications, Electricity and Water Jasim Muhammad al-'Awn, the two sides are to cooperate in the areas marine transport and shipping facilities, prevention of sea pollution and establishment of facilities for transit of passengers and pilgrims to Mecca and Medina via Kuwait.

Based on one of the provisions of the memo, Iran and Kuwait are to cooperate to expand multidimensional transportation and transit of goods and passenger to Central Asian Muslim republics via Iran.

Among other provisions of the memo were establishment of a digital radio link with the capacity of 120 channels, expansion of postal cooperation, decreasing the rate of telephone communication fees and implementation of an agreement reached between the two countries concerning optic fibre.

Iran: Velayati Meets With Visiting Irish Delegation

LD0704152196 Tehran IRNA in English 0956 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 7, IRNA — The visiting Irish parliamentary delegation in a meeting with Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati here Sunday [7 April], voiced Dublin's willingness to boost ties with Iran and remove any obstacles on the way of expansion of bilateral relations.

The delegation which arrived here Saturday on a 2-day visit is led by former Foreign Minister David Andrews and comprises members of the European Parliament as well.

The officials stressed the important role Iran played in the region and the international scene and termed strengthening of ties between Iran and the European Union as essential.

Welcoming expansion of Tehran-Dublin ties, Velayati also considered as a positive move promotion of relations between Iran and the European Union.

Ireland will assume the rotating chairmanship of the EU for a period of six months as of July.

Iran: Larijani Meets With Irish Delegation

LD0704194796 Tehran IRNA in English
1932 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 7, IRNA — An Irish parliamentary delegation that is visiting Tehran here today met with the Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission of Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly Mohammad-Javad Larijani and expressed hope that the parliaments of Ireland and Iran would estalish relations between themselves.

The Iranian official told the Irish delegation that Europe's interest in talks with Iran would eventually serve the benefits of Iran and the continent.

He said the peaceful approach of Europe to Iran was in sharp contrast with hostile policies of the United States to the Islamic republic which, he said, only fanned the flames of anmity and grudge.

Larijani said the Islamic Revolution in Iran had put an end to 150 years of intereference of foreign powers in Iran building an independently democratic system in which, in contrast against the past, the national policies of the country could not be dictated by by foreign embassies in Iran.

He said Iranians have a culture of sincerity and honesty in their relations with other nations and that they would have warm relations with every nation that would be willing to establish relations with Iran on that basis.

The Iranian official refering to Washington's suggestions about Iran's nuclear policies said that the allegations by the United States were totally unfounded without Washington having ever been able to substantiate any part of those charges.

He said the Islamic republic was entitled to nuclear energy no less than any other state, and added that any country offering to build better-equipped nuclear energy plants at lower costs for Iran would naturally be considered for cooperation.

Larijani said because Iran was not at all interested to develop nuclear weapons it could expose her installations to scrutiny without any problem.

He said Iran's cooperation with Russia and Chechnya was based exactly on that principle, and commented that those foreign elements who tried to find fault with Iran's committed policies were in fact disrespectful of international relations.

The Iranian official expressed hope that the visit to Tehran of the Irish delegation would help bring the two nations closer together.

Iran: South African Foreign Minister Arrives

NC0804083396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0330 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] South African Foreign Minister Alred Nzo arrived in Tehran this morning at the head of a political-economic delegation and was welcomed by Foreign Minister Velayati.

In an interview with our correspondent, Velayati said the objective of the visit is to increase bilateral ties. On Tehran-Pretoria relations and on topics to be discussed in Tehran, the foreign minister said:

[Begin Velayati recording] Relations between Iran and South Africa are growing fast in the various fields, not only in the political field, but also in the economic, industrial, and scientific fields. Several delegations on various levels have exchanged visits. We are forming a joint [economic] commission of the two countries.

As I have said, the talks will cover bilateral relations in the various fields. Cooperation on international forums, especially at the Nonaligned Movement, has been good. Both countries are among the active members of the Nonaligned Movement. [passage omitted] [end recording]

The South African foreign minister also said that the objective of his visit to Tehran is to raise the level of ties and to open the South African Embassy in Tehran. He said one of the most important topics to be discussed in Tehran will be increasing trade and economic and industrial cooperation.

Iran: Further on South African Foreign Minister's Arrival

LD0804055296 Tehran IRNA in English
0538 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 8, IRNA — South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo arrived here Monday [8 April] morning on a 3-day visit to discuss promotion of bilateral ties and also inaugurate his country's embassy in Tehran.

Speaking to reporters upon arrival, Nzo said that Iran and South Africa have broad cooperation in various areas including oil, gas and mines.

He added that the two countries enjoy common stand on certain issues in international forums and even hold identical position.

Iran's Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati who greeted his South African counterpart at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport, said that bilateral relations continue to grow and that Iran and South Africa not only enjoy political cooperation but full-scale cooperation. he added Tehran-Pretoria realtions are broadening.

Velayati further told reporters that due to desirable conditions and potentials for deepening of bilateral relations and under the long-term agreements signed, South Africa purchases Iranian oil and Iran is to make use of industrial potentials of South Africa.

According to the Iranian foreign minister, in the light of industrial and educational progresses of South Africa, Tehran and Pretoria can establish full cooperation in scientific and academic fields.

Iran: Hashemi-Rafsanjani Receives South African Foreign Minister

LD0804110596 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani today received Alfred Nzo, foreign minister of South Africa.

Nzo conveyed President Nelson Mandela's best wishes to Hashemi-Rafsanjani, saying: We are keen to expand all-round relations with Iran, especially within the framework of the two countries' joint economic commission.

Nzo then pointed to Iran's successes in many fields, including the fight against narcotics smuggling and the eradication of poverty in rural and deprived regions. He said that South Africa would benefit from Iran's valuable experiences in these fields.

He also briefed Hashemi-Rafsanjani on the latest political, social, and economic situation in South Africa.

According to the report of the Central News Unit's correspondent, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, on his part, emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran places importance on South African issues because of that country's long-standing fight against racism. He said: The Government and people of Iran respect this long-standing record and are prepared, just as they did in the past, to stand alongside the people of South Africa in the era following new developments in that country in order to eliminate difficulties.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani stressed the need for the dispatch of an expert delegation from South Africa for the purposes of surveying and obtaining a better grasp of resources and existing capabilities in Iran. He also stressed the need for the dispatch of a delegation from Iran for the purposes of reviewing ways in which the government and people of South Africa could be assisted. He said: With humanitarian objectives, the Islamic Republic of Iran would like to cooperate with South Africa in all fields.

Iran: Velayati, South African Foreign Minister Hold Talks

*LD0804113996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0930 GMT 8 Apr 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] The foreign ministers of Iran and South Africa discussed bilateral relations, regional and international cooperation, and cooperation within the Economic Cooperation Organization [ECO] and the Southern African Development Community [SADC] at their first round of talks in Tehran this morning.

The two sides expressed satisfaction over the expansion of relations between the two countries and emphasized that ties should be further expanded in the fields of politics, economics, trade, and technology.

South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo explained the latest developments in Southern Africa and said his country is prepared to cooperate in regional issues.

He said South Africa will participate at the opening of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tedzhen railway, which connects the countries of Central Asia to Asian and European highways.

In turn, [Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar] Velayati emphasized the need for regional and intercontinental cooperation as well the strategic significance of SADC, and said the organization is working for global peace and security as well as for the interests of member countries.

He said the creation of international economic organizations is an important step toward intercontinental cooperation.

The second round of talks between the two countries' foreign ministers will be held this afternoon.

Iran: Iraqi Kurd Leader Praises Iran's Humanitarian Assistance

*LD0804114396 Tehran IRNA in English
1138 GMT 8 Apr 96*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, April 8, IRNA — Leader of Iraq's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talebani here Monday appreciated Iran's positive and fundamental steps towards aiding Iraqi people.

In an interview with IRNA here, Talebani stressed that the assistance rendered by the Islamic Republic to Iraqi nation is based on humanitarian objectives.

He called on regional states to support the Iraqi opposition groups to help innocent Iraqi people get rid of their country's tyrannical ruling system.

Iran: 'Systematic Violation' of Human Rights in U.S. Viewed

LD0704140196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1000 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] One of the issues that arises frequently in the American community, and at times attracts world opinion, is the systematic violation of human rights and the rights of minorities in that country, which is carried out by the government, racist individuals or groups, or organized criminal outfits. Today the people of the world believe America to be a country, which because of its burgeoning economy in the past decades, has accepted non-American people and communities from other countries as minorities. These are in addition to the millions of blacks living there. Spanish speakers from Latin America, mainly Mexican, as well as Asians, are among those ethnic and racial minorities that — within the 250-million-strong American community — beside serving in heavy and exhausting jobs, are faced with inhuman problems such as discrimination and aggression. Most of those immigrants and minorities live in the main eastern and western states of that country; that is, Texas, Florida, and California.

It seems that at the moment the mistreatment of these minorities by the U.S. police has become a trend and the norm. Once in while the disclosure of the discriminatory and criminal behavior by police or judiciary in one of the states inflames the minority communities. The beating last week of a Mexican couple by the Californian police and the broadcast of the shocking scenes of that atrocity by one of the state's television stations provoked extensive anger and protest by minorities and immigrants, particularly Mexicans. In the wake of that incident, the Mexican Government officially objected to the U.S. Administration and the State Department of that country, and released a report, which added that in the past six years, 94 Mexican immigrants have lost their lives in America as a result of violent treatment. In most cases, these have been innocent victims and the perpetrators have been released without being tried or punished.

Of course, the immigration issue has always been a major problem in relations between America and Mexico, so much so that almost half the workforce applying to enter the United States is comprised of young unemployed Mexican men. Of these, a small number succeed to get in, but once inside they face hundreds of problems, one of which is violent, discriminatory, and savage treatment by the U.S. police. On the whole, cases of violation of human rights and violence against minorities in America are such that to put America at the head of the countries that violate human rights and the rights of minorities is no exaggeration. The violence in Los Angeles in 1991 is one example. In that incident the beating of a black man provoked protests and riots by blacks in California and then right across America. The riot, of course, was put down through the intervention of federal troops.

Bearing that in mind, American affairs observers and experts believe the recent beating of two Mexican nationals by the Californian police — which provoked a wave of protest and fury by the minorities — can end in a similar riot to that in 1991, which would engulf the whole of America.

Iran: Commentary Views French President's Trip to Egypt

LD0704161896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] French President Jacques Chirac ending his trip to Lebanon arrived on Saturday 6 April in Cairo for a three day visit of Egypt. The French president will hold dialogues with his Egyptian counterpart Husni Mubarak on bilateral relations and various Middle East issues.

Political analysts say important visits to Lebanon and now Egypt by the French President Jacques Chirac is indicative of new Middle East policies of France. The new Gaullist government of France has the intention of having more active foreign policy in North Africa to revive French power in the region. This tendency is definitely more stronger than that of the late French President Francois Mitterrand.

Analysts attach greater significance to the French president's stay in Egypt for its history and geopolitical situation in the Middle East, specially in North Africa. France believes that Egypt is a powerful country of North Africa always playing a role in the major developments of the region. So Egypt can also play a role in pursuing the new French policies in North Africa and Arab states. Apart from this, the visits are believe to have been taken due to inclinations towards Islam in those countries specially in Egypt and the mass immigration to France from the Mediterranean countries. This latter issue has turned into a major challenge for the Paris statesmen. The new neo-Gaullist government in Paris believes if immigration remains uncontrolled, Islamic tendencies will go beyond African borders entering European communities specially France.

Now the European states, to reach their objectives, that is blocking the growth of Islamism by cutting down immigration, demand a joint plan by the European countries and the Southern Mediterranean countries of Africa. Hence it is predicted that Chirac in his three day trip to Egypt will conclude some economic agreements and grant a number of loans for the reconstruction of Egypt worth billions of Francs. This will definitely boost Paris-Cairo economic ties more than ever before. Also the enhancement of relations between the two countries can lead to Washington's discontent in the Middle East and North Africa, making more intense the rivalries between Paris and Washington in this strategic world region.

Iran: Region Concerned Over Turkish-Israeli Military Agreement

LD0704164096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The recent pact between Turkey and the Zionist regime over their military planes, using each other's airspace and airports, has faced negative reaction from regional governments and people. The Turkish defense minister on Thursday, 4 April, termed the aim of the accord as a compensation of the small space at the disposal of Israeli warplanes for their training exercises. However, it was not yet clear whether the military agreement, as some Turkish press have written, contains secret parts or not. It is to be noted the recent Tel Aviv-Ankara agreement, which is unprecedented in its kind in the Middle East, has been signed following growing military ties between the two governments during the past two years.

The existence of Western and secular military forces in Turkey has proven to provide the Zionists with fertile grounds to exercise further influence over the Muslims in that country. So much so that the Zionist influence has passed Turkish borders posing a threat to its neighboring countries. In this regard, reports on Turkish-Zionist military cooperation in Iraq's Kurdistan is worth pondering.

Political observers believe statesmen in Ankara are intending to consolidate their position in the region by forging close ties with Tel Aviv and at the same time, by doing so attract further political and financial support from the United States, specially when Turkey is having problems with Syria and Greece and is suffering from a faltering economy. However, Zionist's record shows that they are not trustworthy partners for boosting political and economic goals. Even over the new military accord between Tel Aviv and Ankara, military experts unanimously believe that the agreement has taken Zionist interests into account and has practically left out Turkey so much so that Zionist papers have referred to the unilateral interest of the accord. This comes at a time when Muslims in Turkey have repeatedly voiced their opposition to the forging of ties with the Zionist regime, expressing sympathy with the Palestinians. However, it does not seem that officials in Ankara have taken the public opinion into account by signing such an accord with Tel Aviv. Elsewhere, there is the possibility that the Zionist regime will take advantage of its agreement with Turkey and use espionage planes instead of training aircraft. Even political experts maintain that it is likely that the Zionist regime uses Turkey as a base to mount attacks on some regional countries.

Hence, it is quite comprehensible why regional countries should feel concerned over Ankara's irresponsible move, for as Lebanon's prominent clergy, al-'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, said on Friday, 5 April, the recent agreement between Turkey and the Zionist regime is a move against regional countries.

Iran: West Azerbaijan's Security Forces' Operations Reviewed

LD0704150596 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1200 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Intelligence Officials of the Western Azerbaijan Province Intelligence Department have identified and smashed 51 espionage or hit squads and narcotics and antique-smuggling networks and groups in the past year.

The head of Western Azerbaijan Province Intelligence Department announcing that added: Last year [Iranian year beginning March 1995] seven espionage networks were identified and 29 of their agents arrested. The members of these groups spied for foreigners for money.

Among other operations carried out by the Intelligence Department last year, he mentioned the identification and arrest of seven members of three hit squads and discovery of 4 bombs. The bombs had been imported into West Azerbaijan for the purpose of setting them off in certain public places. He also mentioned the arrest of 23 anti-revolutionary and saboteurs along with 87 firearms.

On the subject of the campaign against merchants of death [drug dealers], he said: In that period the department officials inflicted damage on seven international drug-smuggling networks and 79 of their agents were arrested along with [seizures of] 1,775 kg morphine and opium, 6.5 kg of gold, 590 million rials in cash, and 200 light and heavy vehicles.

Iran: Ayatollah Discusses Mideast Peace Process in Qom Prayers

LD0604163596 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1408 GMT 6 Apr 96

[Friday prayers second sermon by Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, Assembly of Experts, in Qom on 5 April — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] An issue which is taking place outside the borders of this country is the sinister trip of the Israeli prime minister to some Arab regions. They should know. These Gulf shaykhs, what are they thinking about? They are seeking some form of alibi but everything is controlled by God. If Israel had the strength to defend anyone, it would first defend itself. It would not have been a victim in Rabin's death, it would not have been a victim of internal insecurity. Today there is an American rope around the neck of Israel. If you fail to hold to the divine rope, you become a slave to others.

The fact that the blessed Lord has mentioned two things in the Koran does not mean that you are free. It means that there is a heaven and there is a hell. [passage omitted] The verse does not mean that you are either following the orders of God or serving under the Israeli flag. It means it is a heaven and a hell. [passage omitted]. It means that there are only two ways: heaven or hell. These Gulf shaykhs should know that there is either the rope of God, which is the path of the Koran and the family of the prophet, or there is the rope of America and Israel, which is hell. [passage omitted] The Koran is warning us. The Koran is saying that there is a rope which takes you to the heights of heaven and there is a rope which takes to the depths of hell. You can chose either one. The arrival of the Israeli prime minister means that the shaykhs are falling into the well with their [U.S. and Israeli] rope. This is their problem. They must wake up.

Today they face two problems for which they blame Iran. They are using these instruments of pressure. One is the problem of terrorism and the other is the violation of human rights. They use these instruments of pressure against Iran whenever they can. But the source of terrorism is there. The source of merciless massacres, state terrorism and non-state terrorism, is in there. Sometimes they accuse Iran of terrorism or violation of human rights. However, if there is a place where human beings are respected, it is Iran. They watched the [Iranian] airliner downed [by the U.S.], but they did not protest. They watched the bombardment of dozens and hundreds of innocent people, but they did not protest. Even now when the affects of these actions continue, they fail to protest. But they accuse Iran of terrorism and violation of human rights. Even at times, they are disrespectful about distinguished officials of the country, the distinguished post of the ministry. These people do not accept reason or tradition. They do no respect divine revelation or reason. We hope that the blessed lord, will liberate all Muslims, and even the oppressed people across the world from the evil of America and Israel. [passage omitted]

Iran: Hashemi-Rafsanjani Emphasizes Importance of Hajj

LD0604165896 Tehran IRNA in English 1646 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 6, IRNA — President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani here today emphasized on the role of the hajj as a decisive factor in strengthening Islamic unity, and said the disavowal of disbelievers during the annual pilgrimage was not meant to disturb law and order as alleged, but to foster better understanding among world muslims.

In a meeting with members of the coordination council of the leader's be'tha (representive mission) for the hajj, Hojjat ol-Eslam Rafsanjani described the hajj as the most suitable time for scholars, thinkers and prominent figures of the Islamic world to build relations and exchange views. This would create the spirit of unity and help resolve the problems facing the Muslim world, he added.

"The importance of 'disavowal of disbelievers' should be explained through proper means and methods to the world of Islam so as to better focus on the lofty political and spiritual goals of the hajj," said the president.

He referred in this regard to the attempts of the enemies of Islam to tarnish the image of the sacred system of the Islamic republic, and said the policy of Islamic Iran is aimed at fostering friendship and fraternity among Islamic states.

"Holding the rally of 'disavowal of disbelievers' during the hajj season is not meant to disturb the law and order of the Muslim country of Saudi Arabia, but is part of our fundamental and religiously inalienable principles," added Rafsanjani.

The president also appreciated the efforts of the leader's representative for the hajj, Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammadi Reyshahri, in the satisfactory performance of the pilgrimage by Iranian pilgrims.

Minister of Culture and the Islamic Guidance Mostafa Mir-salim and Hojjat ol-Eslam Reyshahri were present in the meeting.

Iran: Hajj Pilgrims Begin Travel to Saudi Arabia

LD0704150696 Tehran IRNA in English
0747 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jeddah, April 7, IRNA — Transfer operation of Iranian haj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia started early Sunday [7 April] morning and will continue for the next 14 days.

Everyday some 5,000 haj pilgrims will be transferred to Jeddah from Tehran and various provincial capital cities of Iran.

Some 70,000 iranian pilgrims will be transferred to Saudi Arabia within the next 14 days to perform the annual haj rituals.

Iran: Decreasing Foreign Investment in Arab Countries Viewed

LD0704153196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 7 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] According to an AFP report, a government official of Abu Dhabi on Friday 5 April, announced that investment in Arab countries has greatly decreased over the past couple of weeks. Based on statistics, the total investment in 22 Arab countries in 1990 amounted to $3.1 billion and this figure has dropped to $1.7 billion in 1994. It is noteworthy that the volume of investments has lessened mostly in six countries membering the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, PGCC. On this basis, investments in the PGCC member states has dropped from $2 billion in 1990 to $384 million in 1994.

Economic analysts believe that the main reason for the lessening of foreign investment in Arab countries, specially the PGCC member states, can be found in the aftermath of the oil war. Payment of heavy expenses of the oil war to the U.S. and its Western allies has exhausted the financial means of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region. In addition, arms purchases and military expenses in the PGCC countries has left immense debts for these countries. Therefore due to the increase in foreign loans of Arab countries during the past few years, the trust of foreign investors in these countries has practically reduced. For example, Japan, which is considered as one of the biggest economic trade partners of the PGCC member countries, has only invested $4 million in that country.

Now with the lapse of five years since the trend of decrease in investments in Arab countries, government officials of these countries consider attracting internal and foreign investments in non-oil sections as a must. In this framework we can mention the U.S. and the Persian Gulf Arab states trade conference in March this year which greatly emphasized increase of investments in those countries. Economic experts are doubtful as to the efficiency and effectiveness of investments in the industrial and production sectors of the Persian Gulf Arab countries, since the economy of this countries are dependent on oil, and the industrial sector does not play such a significant role in this regard. For example, the industrial export of the PGCC member countries in 1994 was only $8 billion, while on the other hand the sale of oil, petrol, and chemicals of those countries has been estimated at over $70 billion. In addition, the major part of non-oil investments in these countries consists of chemical products industries, metals, and food industries which are products lacking the power of competition in foreign markets.

As a whole, observers believe that although Arab countries have started a wide campaign for foreign investments, but experience shows that increase in these types of iavestments has not played a significant role in the industrial expansion of these countries and most of these investments have been transferred to lucrative sectors. Therefore decrease in foreign investment should be considered a good fortune. Maybe in this way, further economic dependencies of these countries on foreign countries can be avoided.

Iran: IRNA Reports on Balance of Trade Payments

LD0704152596 Tehran IRNA in English
1337 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 7, IRNA — Iran's balance of payment showed dlrs. 3.275 billion surplus for the third quarter of the past Iranian calendar year (ended december 21, 1995), an increase of dlrs. 916 million as compared to the same figure for the first half of the year (ended september 22, 1995).

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) in the latest issue of its periodical 'Namagarhay-e Eqtesadi' wrote that Iran's trade balance surmounted dlrs. 4.709 billion between march 21 and december 21, 1995.

The volume of Iran's exports reached to dlrs. 13.784 [as received, presumably billion] and that of its imports to dlrs. 9.075 billion within the period.

Meanwhile, the value of non-oil exports amounted to dlrs. 2.477 billion within the said period.

Based on the report, Iran's short-term, mid-term and long-term foreign commitments, totalled dlrs. 22.968 billion by December 21, 1995, showing a decrease of dlrs. 444 million compared to the same figure for the first half of the last year.

Iran: Oil Minister Interviewed on Oil Price Increases

LD0604191496 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 6 Apr 96

[Interview with Iranian Petroleum Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh-Kho'i by unidentified studio presenter in Tehran — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Presenter] The oil minister announced the reasons for increased prices of fuel oil in an interview today. We invited him for an interview in the studio tonight.

Welcome, Mr. Aqazadeh. Would you explain about the reasons for increased oil product prices at the beginning of this year?

[Aqazadeh-Kho'i] In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. As it has been announced earlier, note 19 of the second five-year development plan, ratified by the Islamic Consultative Majles, contains a specific plan for increasing oil product prices throughout the duration of the second development plan, as well as the amounts of those increases. As you know our per capita consumption of oil products is very high. Wastage of fuel oils — bearing in mind their international value — is great. Therefore note 19 sets out a combination of various plans which, God willing, we will carry out in the duration of the second development plan. What we have done is strictly according to the law and the amounts envisaged in that law.

[Presenter] Thank you. Mr. Aqazadeh, the increased oil product prices has brought indiscriminate price rises in fares in its wake. Please tell us what measures is the Oil Ministry adopting to prevent indiscriminate fare increases?

[Aqazadeh-Kho'i] Since last year we have adopted various measures to prevent a fare rise or to facilitate urban transport. For instance we have about 20,000 common and fixed-route taxis in Tehran. We have imported 15,000 kits for turning those vehicles into gas-using ones. That was from the Oil Ministry's foreign currency allocation. Earlier the taxi organization had imported 5,000 such kits. Thus, today, all the necessary kits for turning petrol-engines in vehicles into gas-using ones have been imported and supplied to the taxi organization.

To encourage drivers to change their engines into gas-using ones we have allocated a wide-ranging subsidy. In fact that means that a common or fixed route taxi driver or even a private driver will have to make a monthly payment of only 500 tumans no matter what their mileage. That does not even cover the wages at the liquefied natural gas stations. In reality we are supplying the common and fixed-route taxi-divers with free liquefied natural gas so that not only the urban environment in Tehran and other cities is being safeguarded — the effectiveness of which is most crucial — but also a cheaper fuel is replacing petrol.

Besides that, we have given two billion tumans to municipalities in the country. That money has already been paid to strengthen urban transport: for buying buses or supplying necessary equipment. A considerable portion of that fund has been allocated to Tehran to buy buses, bearing in mind the volume of traffic there. [passage omitted]

Compared with 1373 [Iranian year beginning 21 March 1994], last year we enjoyed decreased consumption rather than an increase. Last year there was a daily saving of 100,000 barrels of fuel, more than what was envisaged in the budget bill. [passage omitted] Another daily savings of 100,000 barrels has been envisaged for 1375. We hope that the people cooperate in this to help with currency income. I ask the officials concerned with common and fixed-route taxis to keep the people in mind. What is certain is that even drivers who have vehicles with petrol-engines will not have to pay more than 90 tumans per day as the average consumption is about 30 liters per day. Such a price increase cannot lead to increased fares.

[Presenter] Thank you, Mr. Aqazadeh.

Iran: Speaker Calls For Large Turnout in 2d Round of Elections

LD0604211596 Tehran IRNA in English 2056 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 6, IRNA — Majles speaker Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri here today called for a massive turnout for the second round of the parliamentary polls scheduled for April 19, and termed it a "religious and political duty".

Nateq-Nuri told a gathering of people from Mazandaran province that that people should cast their votes for those candidates who follow the guidelines of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali

Khamene'i and are committed to the values of the Islamic revolution.

Prasing the role of the Mazandarani people in defence of the Islamic revolution, he recalled the efforts of the people of Gonbad and Amol to quell the disturbances created by terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Outfit (MKO) and other anti-revolutionary grouplets.

Nepal & Bhutan

Nepal: Refugee Talks With Bhutan 'Destined for Deadlock'

BK0804053696 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 7 Apr 96

[Report by THE KATHMANDU POST — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KATHMANDU, April 6 - With even the seventh round of ministerial talks on refugee repatriation apparently destined for a deadlock, it is becoming clear that the solution to the problem won't be achieved through bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan.

The Nepalese team is less optimistic about the outcome of the negotiations after delegations led by the foreign ministers of the two countries failed to make any progress in the second day of the talks today.

No progress could be made in todays talks stood firmly by their previous positions, it is learnt. Nepal today reiterated its stand that all the refugees in the camps in eastern Nepal should be allowed to go home with dignity. Bhutan on the other hand maintained that it would take back only its 'bonafide citizens' - those rejected as Bhutanese nationals before 1958.

"There has been no fundamental change in the positions of the two countries," said Foreign Minister Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani after today's talks.

After the breakdown of the sixth round of ministerial talks in Thimpu last year, Nepal concluded that the issue could not be resolved through bilateral talks. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba even requested Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao for his help in resolving the problem.

Foreign Minister Dr Lohani had also said that Nepal agreed for the current round of bilateral talks as advised by India.

Emerging from closed doors after about a two hour long one-to-one discussions, the two foreign ministers just about repeated their yesterday's statement.

"We are continuing to exchange our positions and our talks are continuing in good spirit," Bhutanese foreign minister Lyonpo Dawa Tsering said.

A participant in the discussions told THE KATHMANDU POST, the Bhutanese side hasn't budged from its previous position. "They are trying to continue the talks to next round."

Asked if another round of talks would be necessary on the issue, Tshering said, "We are neighbouring countries. I had the opportunity to came to Kathmandu. And, Dr Lohani should also be given the opportunity to visit Thimpu."

The two foreign ministers discussed various ways to abridge the differences of opinion on the categories of the refugees.

"We handed over a complete set of documents, explaining our position on the refugees and the procedures of their implementation, to the Bhutanese party and they have agreed to study and discuss the same tomorrow," Lohani said.

The Bhutanese side is not ready to take back 'willful migrants' saying that would force them to accept even the temporary workers who worked in various development projects in Bhutan, the source said.

"Even His Majesty King Jigme requested "Lhotsampas" in several southern Bhutanese villages not to migrate but they didn't listen," the Bhutanese side is learnt to have said.

Refugees in the eastern Nepalese camps, however, maintain that the King's visit during the day were followed by the intrusions of the army at night. "The army destroyed our property and took away our citizenship documents," they say.

Meanwhile, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party chairman Narayan Man Bijukchhe 'Rohit' today said the bilateral talks would not bring about positive results in the talks. "As the key to the problem lies in Delhi, Nepal should hold talks with India on the issue," he said.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Further on Killing of Opposition Party Official

BK0404155496 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1514 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Javed Ashraf, additional secretary general of Lahore died as a result of shooting by unidentified gunmen in Lahore this afternoon. According to police sources, in violation of laws [more than four persons at a place], PML-N workers started a demonstration along Bedang Road and were proceeding toward Lahore High court. When police prevented the demonstration from reaching Mal Road, the participants of the demonstration became angry, and lobbed petrol bombs and resorted to shooting at the police. They set fire to a police post at Regal Square. Later, under the leadership of a PML-N leader, Javed Ashraf, the mob opened fire on Dayal Singh Mansion branch of the United Bank Limited [UBL], seriously injuring the bank manager. The PML-N workers also opened fire on Shizan Restaurant which is adjacent to the UBL building, seriously injuring one more [as heard] employee of the restaurant. The police has registered the case and is investigating.

Pakistan: Bhutto Speaks on U.S. Relations, Elements Plotting Ouster

BK0504142296 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Performing the ground-breaking ceremony of the Sukkur bypass and Sukkur bridge project in Sukkur today, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said eradication of poverty and provision of basic amenities to the common man and strengthening the defense of Pakistan are the priorities of her government. The project, which will cost 1.924 billion rupees, is one of the biggest flyovers in Pakistan. The total length of the bypass will be 11 km with 5.4 km-long four-lane carriage way and 5.6 km-long two-lane carriage way. The length of the bridge over the River Indus will be 1.6 km with eight canal bridges and road-rail overpass.

Addressing the gathering, the prime minister said progress of the communication sector is the dream of the awami [popular] government and 120 million of Pakistan and the government is fast heading toward the fulfillment of this dream. [passage omitted]

Referring to Pakistan's foreign policy, the prime minister said our relations with the United States today are good and the passage of the Brown amendment has vindicated our stand. She said certain elements are conspiring to get her out of power. Their aim is to isolate Pakistan in the comity of nations. But, she said, with the help of the people she will frustrate their nefarious designs.

Pakistan: Prime Minister Blames 'Foreign Powers' for Terrorism

BK0604085296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 5 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said the Pakistan People's Party is committed to serving the people; it understands that it came to power with the support of the people and will have to approach the people to seek their support in future elections. Addressing a ground-breaking ceremony today for the Sukkur Bypass — the country's biggest — and a bridge project, she said the government is implementing many projects for the speedy development of the country. She referred to the Hyderabad Bypass project and said that several mass transit projects have been launched in Karachi and Lahore and that the Karachi-Gwadar highway is being constructed. These projects are aimed at expediting economic activity in the country. She said that Pakistan enjoys an important geographical position, adding that the disintegration of the Soviet Union has opened new avenues for economic activity.

The prime minister said those who are against the country's prosperity and the people's welfare are engaged in spreading rumors. She said that once the government succeeded in highlighting the Kashmir issue at the global level, the vested interests began subversive activities in the country, especially in Karachi. In this context, she appreciated the Sindh Government's efforts to deal with terrorism in Karachi. She said the government will not let the conspiracies to divide Sindh or Pakistan succeed. The prime minister said terrorists are targeting the innocent people of Karachi at the instructions of foreign powers. She said it is the government's duty to provide full protection to the people. The government will not allow criminals to indulge in terrorism under the guise of politics. The prime minister said: We have driven the terrorists away from Karachi and will force them to run from Lahore, where they are plotting bloodshed.

Benazir Bhutto said: I salute the people who, during the World Cup cricket match, showed the whole world that peace prevails in the country, thus disproving the propaganda against Pakistan. She expressed the hope that the present government's policies and programs will help realize the aspirations of Jinnah and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. [passage omitted]

Pakistan: Prime Minister Expresses Views on UN Security Council

BK0804004096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1600 GMT 5 Apr 96

["Views" expressed by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in a column appearing in the Jeddah ARAB NEWS — read by announcer]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The United Nations as it currently functions is hardly global or cooperative. Rather, it is at the mercy of its Security Council, whose five permanent member nations — the United States, Great Britain, Russia, China, and France — account for a mere 2.7 percent of the UN's total membership. The newspapers daily carry different reports on bombing in Israel, rampant organized crime in Russia, unimpeded narcotics trafficking in South America, and constant threat of environmental disaster. No longer is military conflict the only threat to international peace and stability. These problems demand more than the same old solutions. They require a level of cooperation never before attempted.

With this in mind, we turn our attention to the one organization whose purpose is to strive for the sort of unity we so desperately need; that is, the United Nations. And while it is true that this 2.7 percent represents 60 percent of the world's economic wealth and nearly 80 percent of its military potential, bombs and dollars alone are not the solution to our current problems. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, however, the United Nations has become a major player on the international stage and it deserves the increased scrutiny that its new role demands.

What can be done to improve the Council and make it more representative? A number of proposals are currently under consideration. There is a broad consensus among nonaligned nations such as Pakistan that the composition of the Council needs to be altered, although exactly how it should be changed is a matter of great debate. Some proposals call for an increase in the number of either permanent or nonpermanent members. One plan includes the creation of a new category of semipermanent ones eligible for election to the Council more frequently. Another idea is the allocation of Council seats on a regional basis.

It is the position of Pakistan that an increase in the number of permanent members would be at variance with the sovereign equality of states, a founding principle of the United Nations. Instead, we would like to see expansion of the membership with the intent of creating an equitable geographical distribution of seats. The reform of the Security Council should go beyond simply noticing membership requirements. However, the expansion should go hand in hand with efforts to increase the Council's effectiveness and efficiency and promote greater democracy and accountability to the General Assembly.

That has been the trend since before the UN Charter created the Security Council in 1945. Early proposals made a clean and emphatic distinction between the powers of the General Assembly and those of the Council. The General Assembly was to discuss and make recommendations regarding economic and social matters but to have no powers of any significance with regard to political issues. In contrast, the Council was granted sole jurisdiction over matters relating to peace and security. This in effect created a directorate of greater powers, one which was irremovable and immutable. During the initial UN meetings, the scope of the General Assembly was broadened, allowing the body to also deal with peace and security issues. The assembly could not make any recommendations with regard to any dispute or situation in which the Security Council was exercising its functions. Another landmark action, the so-called uniting for peace resolution of 1950, further involved the General Assembly in matters that had previously been the exclusive domain of the Security Council. The resolution said that responsibility of maintaining peace and security rested with the organization as a whole.

The General Assembly could not absolve itself of the blame that the Security Council failed to keep the peace, but these resolutions have not gone far enough to make the powers that be in the Security Council truly accountable to the General Assembly. Until such a time as the balance of power shifts to the Assembly, the thesis of might is right will still be the determining factor in global interaction. The catch 22, of course, is that any change in the UN Charter can be vetoed by one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. It is exactly this sort of power politics that needs to be subdued if we as a world are going to be able to face and overcome the myriad challenges confronting us.

Pakistan: Officials Receive 'High-Powered' PRC Economic Delegation

BK0704082196 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] There are vast and bright prospects of further cooperation and exchange of technical assistance between Pakistan and China in major fields, especially in the heavy and light engineering sector. This was stated by federal minister for industries and production, Brigadier, Retired, Mohammad Asghar, while talking to a high-powered 33-member Chinese economic delegation in Islamabad today. He said Sino-Pak friendship is time-tested and growing strong day by day. The minister said Heavy Mechanical Complex and Heavy Electrical Complex are the best examples of mutual cooperation.

Secretary, industries and production, Mr. Aftab Ahmad Khan, briefed the delegation about the free investment, economic, and trade policy of the government. He also apprised the delegation about the number of steps taken by the government to attract foreign investors and traders.

The visiting high-powered Chinese delegation comprises representatives of a number of different firms and enterprises to explore further vistas of joint ventures and mutual cooperation in different economic sectors.

Pakistan: Bhutto Denies Acquisition of PRC Ring Magnets

BK0604140496 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 6 Apr 96 pp 1, 9

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Sukkur — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto categorically rebuffed the propaganda that Pakistan has acquired ring magnets from China for uranium enrichment.

"It is mere a propaganda against Pakistan," the prime minister said, while speaking as chief guest at the ground-breaking ceremony of Rs. [rupees] 192 crore Sukkur bypass project here on Friday.

Benazir Bhutto said the propaganda was part of the conspiracies engineered against the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] government. The anti-people forces do not want the power of people to grow. The foreign enemies, too, do not want to see Pakistan as a strong country. The propaganda is carried out against Pakistan, within and outside, by those who do not want Pakistan to be a strong country.

While referring to her visit to the United States, she said, the US president took a principled decision and said it was unjust to hold back the equipment and money of Pakistan. She expressed her thanks to Senator Brown, who, she said, took a just stand and the US legislature approved the Brown amendment and called for return of money or arms to Pakistan.

Benazir said, India has not been happy with the moral victory of Pakistan and has tried to wage a propaganda against it and got false reports published. She said, the American press reported that Pakistan has acquired ring magnets from China for uranium enrichment. "We did not acquire any ring magnets from China for uranium enrichment and China, too, has denied this," she categorically stated.

Nuclear plan: The prime minister said then another drama was staged whereby it was alleged that in 1980 something was stolen from the briefcase of Pakistan's renowned scientist, Dr. Qadeer Khan. She said these bogeys are floated by the enemies of Pakistan because they are not happy with the improved ties between Pakistan and the U.S. They are not happy with the enhanced prestige of Pakistan. They are not happy that during the government of Benazir Bhutto the Kashmir issue has become a big issue. These elements, she said, first tried to create lawlessness in Karachi because they wanted the government of Benazir to go. They wanted the ouster of her government because they wanted Pakistan to be weakened and destroyed. But, it is not the destiny of our country that we should remain isolated and weak, she declared.

Terrorism: Benazir paid tributes to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Abdullah Shah and his administration for fighting against the terrorist and conspirators, who planned to divide Sindh and Pakistan. "We will never allow such plans to succeed," she said. These elements, the prime minister said, had made innocent people in Karachis their target at the behest of foreign forces. But, she said, it is the government's responsibility to provide protection to the people.

The purpose of the government was not that it should allow terrorists and criminals to carry out their activities under the garb of politics — and when they are caught by the neck, they pose themselves as patriotic politicians, she said. "Politics and crimes are separate entities and both cannot be linked to each other," she made it plain.

She said the former chief of the army staff had also disclosed as to how conspiracies were hatched against the government. But, she said, those who conspire should know that we also know how to thwart their designs. Defeat is their destiny, she said, about the conspirators.

Assassination attempt: The prime minister referred to her visit to Lahore on the occasion of World Cup final. She said there she was informed about the arrest of a gang of terrorists, which had planned to use arms to defame Pakistan at a time when the whole world had its eyes set on the World Cup. The gang intended to make assassination attempts on the lives of prime minister and governor to make the foreign investors flee from Pakistan. The prime minister said she salutes the people of Pakistan that during the World Cup the whole world saw that there was peace in Pakistan and which belied the propaganda carried out against the country. Anti-state elements: Benazir said the Punjab administration had reported to her that another gang had been arrested from Faisalabad. She said it was also reported that anti-people elements, who wanted to grab power and thought that PPP was an impediment in their way, had formed teams and asked them to go to Punjab to create lawlessness there as lawlessness produced nothing in Karachi. She said these people have been given bombs and arms in their hands to carry out their nefarious designs.

She asked whether it was not a matter of regret that they are out to play with the lives of innocent people only in the greed for power. She said it is regrettable that there are people who do not have patience to wait till next elections. It was regrettable that they want to play with the blood of people. "If they have no patience to wait and want to play with the lives and blood of people, they should know that they are pitched against Benazir Bhutto and she will defeat them." She said they should know the way we made them flee from Karachi and we will also make them flee from Lahore, where they are planning to shed blood of people." [passage omitted]

Pakistan: Official Claims Nation's Nuclear Program Never 'Capped'

BK0704120396 Islamabad THE NATION in English 4 Apr 96 p 16

[Report by THE NATION correspondent in Lahore]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chairman Awami Qayadat Party (AQP) Gen. (retired) Mirza Aslam Beg has claimed that Pakistan has never capped its nuclear program.

"All that we did was reduction of the uranium enriching process from 95 percent to 3.5 percent during the former regime of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1989 because by then we had enough enriched uranium". This decision was taken after high-level meeting, he said. "Regarding the enrichment process does not mean the freezing of nuclear program in any way" he made it clear. He said that all the allegations regarding freezing of the nuclear program were baseless.

Gen. (Reted) Aslam Beg said this while answering a question at a Press conference at his party office on Wednesday. He, besides the nuclear issue, talked about the recent Supreme Court Judgment, army's stance in the political scenario and future plans of his party — AQP. Former COAS said that Pakistan became the nuclear power in 1987 and not in 1990. "When I was Vice Army Chief, Pakistan had attained the capability of making Atom Bomb", he said, adding that Pakistan not only had made Atom Bomb but also have successfully conducted its computer test. He further said that Pakistan also has guns to fire Atom Bombs if these are miniaturized by our Engineers. Our fighter planes like F-16 also have the capability of dropping Atom Bomb.

Replying to a question regarding the publication of a report in THE WASHINGTON POST which was later carried by the local newspaper that the blueprints of the Pakistan's Atom Bomb had been stolen by the U.S. intelligence agents from the luggage of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Aslam Beg categorically termed the report as false and part of the conspiracy against Pakistan. He explained that some senior Indians have been working in big U.S. intelligence agencies who are on the mission of leveling baseless allegations against Pakistan.

The allegation against Pakistan regarding getting ring-magnets for nuclear program from China was also false and part of propaganda campaign, he claimed and added: "Why should Pakistan get ring-magnets from China when we ourselves can manufacture such items". As far as the alleged incident of stealing blueprint of the Pakistani Atom Bomb from Dr. Abdul Qadeer's bag, he said it was not possible at all the blueprint of an Atom Bomb is large enough as it cannot be carried in the luggage bag.

Regarding the role of army in the political affairs of the country, he said that about 7 to 8 years back, the army had realized that it should not interfere in the political affairs of the country because it is the right of representatives of the people."

Pakistan: Foreign Minister Comments on Test Ban Treaty, Kashmir

BK0804043096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali has said Pakistan will not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty unilaterally. Speaking on a television program last night, he asked how Pakistan could be forced to sign the treaty unless India does the same. The foreign minister also said Pakistan will adhere to its principled stand on resolving the Kashmir issue in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan: Minister Says MQM Terrorists Training in India

BK0604133896 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 6 Apr 96 p 4

[APP Report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kamalia — Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Khalid Ahmad Khan Kharal has said that Altaf group terrorists were still getting training in India.

In a statement here Friday [5 April] Kharal said Altaf Hussain who talked of a separate province and a state had reportedly said "those people who have migrated to Pakistan from India after Independence have committed a big mistake".

He dismissed Altaf's accusations that the government was involved in breaking the country saying it was something preposterous. He said such an absurd statement came from a person who was dancing to the tune of foreign masters.

Kharal said that absconder Altaf Hussain should face the learned courts if he has some respect for judiciary and stop suggesting government to implement the Supreme Court order. He said Altaf Hussain should know the government has already started implementing the decision of the court.

He condemned Altaf Hussain for his threat to take revenge from Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. He said before giving threats of revenge he should return to Karachi from London and try to stand on the Faisal Road where people of Karachi will welcome him by pelting stones on him. Kharal said after that Altaf Hussain will drop the idea of becoming "Quaid-i-Tehrik". [Leader of the Movement]

Kharal said Altaf group terrorists had been directed to go underground on the desire of the leader of the opposition who wanted to create lawlessness in the Punjab province. He said that leader of the opposition had deliberately planned a terrorist act on the eve of the death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Pakistan: Minister Reiterates Nation Not 'Afraid' of Indian Threats

BK0704142696 Islamabad THE NATION in English 7 Apr 96 pp 1,4

[APP Report]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Kasur—Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali on Saturday [6 April] reiterated that the country was always prepared to defend its geographical frontiers.

Addressing a number of meetings in his home constituency situated near the border-belt of Kasur, the Foreign Minister said Pakistan would not be cowed down by Indian threats of carrying out another nuclear explosion.

Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali made it clear that "today's Pakistan is far different from that of 1971. We cannot be cowed down of Indian threats of possessing nuclear warheads or carrying out another nuclear explosion."

"We are a brave nation living in this region for the last thousand years and we will survive for thousands of years. It is high time that India should now give up wishful thinking. We are neither afraid of Indian missiles nor threats of nuclear devices, brave nations know very well how to safeguard their integrity", the Foreign Minister said.

Addressing gatherings at Ganda Singh Wala, Sodiwala, Sangra, Khudian and Usmanwala, the Foreign Minister dilated upon various important issues including latest development in occupied Kashmir after the killing of renowned human right activist Jalil Andrabi, country's nuclear policy and construction work on the Asia's biggest water treatment plant.

The Foreign Minister said days of Indian occupation of Kashmir are numbered and no amount of brutality, barbarism, and violations of human rights could prevent Kashmiris from achieving right to self-determination.

He termed proposed elections in occupied Kashmir under Indian rule as "fraud". He pointed out that even National Party headed by Puppet Farooq Abdullah was not in the favour of holding elections there. He recalled that similar elections were also held in Indian Punjab. "The only solution of Kashmir problem is holding of plebescite according to the UN resolutions to let Kashmiris decide whether they want to live with India or Pakistan", Sardar Asif said.

The Foreign Minister further pointed out that he invited his Indian counterpart Parnab Mukherjee to hold debate on Kashmir problem on Cable News Network (CNN) but he escaped, he added. Paying glowing tributes to the political sagacity of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, the Foreign Minister said it was due to their sincere and untiring efforts that Kashmir issue had been revived and was taken to all international fora. [passage omitted]

Pakistan: Nawaz Rejects Bhutto's Offer of Talks

BK0704144296 Islamabad THE NATION in English 7 Apr 96 pp 1,4

[Report by THE NATION correspondent in Lahore]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Opposition Leader Mian Nawaz Sharif describing Javaid Ashraf's murder as similar in nature to that of Nawab Muhammad Ahmed Khan's has said his killers, the present rulers, will meet the same fate as Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto did.

He was addressing the office-bearers of recently-formed Pakistan Air League (PAL), the PML-N [Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz] wing in PIA [Pakistan Internal Airline] union, here at his Model Town residence on Saturday.

Central Vice-President of PML-N Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, PML-J's [Pakistan Muslim League-Junejo] Zafrullah Jamali, PML-N Secretary Information Mushahid Hussain, Mian Munir Ahmed MNA [Member of National Assembly], Mian Mehraj Din MPA [Member of Provincial Assembly] and Pervez Rashid were also present on the occasion.

Quoting TV programme on Bhutto's 17th anniversary Nawaz said Benazir with tears in her eyes, through this programme once again tried to cash her father's death.

But who will observe the death anniversary of those people who were killed on the orders of Z.A. Bhutto, asked Nawaz.

He said those people were also true Pakistanis and son of soil and while observing death anniversary of her father Benazir should think about those shuhada (Martyrs). He said Z.A. Bhutto was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court for killing political opponents. Nawaz said Benazir has also chosen her father's way and Javaid Ashraf's murder is one of the precedents to this effect. He said the rulers have no respect for law, Constitution, democratic norms, human rights, human values and ethics. Nawaz said: "We will avenge Javaid's murder from the government, administration and police and they will not be forgiven for this targeted killing at all."

He said Javaid was waging war against enemies of Pakistan which is the manifesto of the PML and all the Muslim Leaguers will accomplish his mission. He said Javaid was a brave and courageous man, he received bullets on his chest and the Muslim League is proud of its shaheed.

Muslim League will continue its Jehad against the anti-state and anti-people rulers to foil their conspiracies against Pakistan, said Nawaz. He said they are heading towards ultimate victory and the time is not far when they will achieve the goal.

He said the whole nation is with PML-N and with the help of the masses Muslim League will oust the anti-Pakistan and anti-people rulers and will hold them accountable.

To a question Nawaz said that an emergency meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim League has been summoned to chalk out future strategy of the party and to finalise the protest programme against Javaid's murder. He said they do not expect justice from the government side because the rulers are Javaid's killers and to get the FIR registered they will go to the court.

Replying to another question he said after Javaid's murder they have decided not to reply Benazir's letter in protest. He said if she will send bullets in her letter then how it is possible for them to answer it.

He said Benazir has played havoc with Karachi and every third family of the city has faced the State terrorism physically or mentally. He said Benazir is trying to rule the Karachiites through State-terrorism and this trend is not only dangerous for the country but for the government itself. He said Benazir is claiming that she has 'tamed' Karachiites while the souls of the citizens of this city are wounded. Benazir's 'adventure' has created East Pakistan-like situation in Karachi and each patriotic Pakistani will condemn her approach, said he.

He assured the PAL office-bearers that his party will fully support them on national airline's issues. He said the rulers have destroyed the PIA by pursuing wrong policies. He said PIA once was of the best airlines of the world but Jiala culture has almost destroyed it. After regaining power the Muslim League will put an end to all the irregularities in PIA committed by the present rulers said he.

He urged the PAL office-bearers to play their due role to save the national carrier.

Commenting on fresh taxation Nawaz said it will directly affect the common man and masses life will become more miserable. He said whenever Benazir came in to power she created problems for the common man and never provided them any relief.

PPI adds: Mian Nawaz Sharif has said that if returned to power his party would end politics of hatred and vengeance from the country.

He was talking to a delegation of recently-established Air League Union at the PIA who called on him at his Model Town residence on Saturday.

He said the present inefficient and corrupt government is responsible for all ills spreading into the society rapidly.

He alleged that government has ruined all national institutions, the recruitment of Jialas on massive scale has badly affected the performance of almost every institution of the country.

He said if voted to power his party will eliminate all corrupt elements and restore the credibility of these institutions.

Meanwhile, talking to reporters informally Nawaz Sharif while rejecting the offer of dialogue by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said that they would prefer to contact the masses instead of approaching present criminal and cruel government.

He held the present government responsible for killing of Javed Ashraf. "Plot of Javaid's murder was finalised at the Governor House, he alleged.

He said Muslim League would produce facts to prove that rulers were involved in the assassination of its key party leader. "We will avenge Javed's murder," Nawaz Sharif declared.

Nawaz accused the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] government of toeing the line of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto by resorting to State-terrorism and said that the government was creating Karachi-like situation in Lahore and Javaid's murder was a part of a conspiracy hatched by the PPP leadership to disturb peaceful atmosphere and destroy democracy.

He said Karachi is burning while the rulers have turned a deaf ear to the complaints of extrajudicial killings. He said if the Government did not learn lesson from the past it would be responsible for its repercussions for the country.

He said the only solution of Karachi problem is negotiations between the government and the MQM [Muhajir Qaumi Movement]

He said Muslim League is striving hard to rescue the country from the clutches of present corrupt rulers. "We will check them and not allow to make any dent to the national economy," he added.

Commenting on the levy of General Sales Tax on 146 items of daily use, Nawaz termed it great injustice with the poor who already are leading miserable lives.

Nawaz Sharif said government by presenting another mini-budget prior to the Federal Budget for 1996-97 has planned to eliminate the middle class. He advised the people to stand up and oust the present government.

Answering a question regarding launching of a movement by the Opposition against the Government, he said the Supreme Council of the Opposition would soon discuss this issue.

When asked whether he feels differences between the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan, PML (N) Chief said he only heard about it.

He blamed that government is creating hurdles in way of the Opposition so that it could not play its role in the parliament effectively. He alleged that profit earning United Bank Limited is being sold at throw away prices.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: President Extends Emergency Rule Throughout Country

BK0804065196 Hong Kong AFP in English 0653 GMT 8 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, April 8 (AFP) — President Chandrika Kumaratunga has extended emergency rule throughout Sri Lanka, giving wider powers to police and security forces, parliament was told Monday [8 April].

Kumaratunga, in a message to Speaker K.B. Ratnayake, said she had taken the extraordinary measure four days ago through a proclamation issued by her. The country was being informed of the move for the first time Monday.

Earlier the state of emergency, which gives sweeping authority to police and the military to arrest and detain anti-government activists for prolonged periods without trial, was restricted to the north-eastern regions where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) lead a separatist struggle.

"The reason for making the proclamation is for the preservation of public order and maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community," Kumaratunga said in her message to parliament.

The surprise move came ahead of local council elections due before the end of June. Last year, Kumaratunga had exercised her executive authority to extend the term of the local bodies by one year.

However, any more delay of the local government polls can only be done under emergency rule across the country, political analysts said. Parliament is expected to debate the emergency on Tuesday.

The government action is seen by analysts as a sign that the local elections which were billed as a crucial mid-term test for President Kumaratunga will now almost certainly be called off.

Kumaratunga came to power in August 1994 promising to end the state of emergency which was first imposed on May 18, 1983 to combat the Tamil separatist movement.

The People's Alliance government of Kumaratunga had often described the emergency as a draconian piece of law.

Sri Lanka: Troops Kill 43 Tamil Rebels in Skirmishes

BK0604091496 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 6 Apr 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TROOPS engaged in a search and clear operation in Walikamam West in Jaffna killed 43 more Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] in skirmishes at Chankanai, Vaddukoddai, Alaveddi and Pandatirippu on Thursday, [5 April] military sources in Colombo said.

Some of the bodies and a large haul of weapons which included 11 T 81 rifles, 12 T 56 rifles, one light machine gun, one mm grenade launcher and two RPGs were recovered by the troops. Two radio sets and two binoculars were among the other items picked up by the troops.

Five soldiers were wounded in these clashes.

A Colombo datelined Reuter report said that the LTTE in a statement faxed to the agency yesterday accused the security forces of shelling residential areas. But the military denied this adding that they had been shelling well identified LTTE targets in Vadamarachchi and Thenmarachchi and these targets are away from residential areas, the report said.

Troops in the East on Wednesday ambushed a group of Tigers killing three of them. During a subsequent search, troops recovered one body and two T 56 rifles. One Police constable and a Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) member were injured in this confrontation.

Meanwhile, reports reaching Colombo said that LTTE cadres on Friday ambushed a group of Police commandos at Pulukunawa in Ampara, eastern province, killing at least 18 of them.

Chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe confirmed the attack, but added that he was still awaiting the details.

Sri Lanka: Fighting Said To Escalate in North, East

BK0704070596 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 6 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Security forces killed nine more Tamil Tiger rebels in a fresh battle as fighting escalated across the embattled northern and eastern regions. Officials in Colombo said that the Army troops shot dead the nine members of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] in the Walikamam sector of the Jaffna peninsula yesterday.

Defense sources said that a total of 95 automatic assault rifles were recovered from nearly 150 LTTE men and women killed in the Walikamam sector in the past one week. Military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said that they had sorted out the Tigers who are still hiding in Walikamam. The military wrested control of Walikamam after nearly 550 days of fighting ending in December.

The Operational Headquarters of the Defense Ministry reported this evening that a large group of terrorists attacked STF [Special Task Force] police commandos sent out from the Pulukunawa detachment in the Amparai District. Troops were backed with small arms fire. According to the communique, 18 STF personnel were killed during the confrontation around 0745 last morning and eight others were injured. Reports say that an unspecified number of terrorists were also killed or wounded in a counterattack by troops reinforcement.

Security forces claimed over 100 terrorists killed this week following a search and clear operation in the north of the country. There has been an upsurge in the fighting in eastern Sri Lanka as the security forces continued their offensive against the LTTE. Last week the troops launched an operation to flush out the terrorists from the former LTTE stronghold of Walikamam and making the area safe for civilians to return.

Sri Lanka: LTTE Admits 7 'Senior Men' Killed by Government Troops

BK0704092896 Hong Kong AFP in English 0844 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] COLOMBO, April 7 (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas Sunday [7 April] admitted losing seven of their senior men in ferocious battles with government forces as a senior minister vowed to "annihilate" the rebels and restore ethnic peace.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said over its clandestine radio that it lost four cadres in a confrontation with police Special Task Force (STF) Commandos and three more in the north on Friday.

The Voice of Tigers radio gave no casualty figures for the STF in the battle in the eastern district of Ampara but an earlier Tiger statement from London said 16 commandos were killed, two fewer than the military cited.

As violence escalated in the island's north east, junior defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte said at public rallies in Moneragala district in the island's south east that security forces were poised to destroy the LTTE.

"We are going according to a set plan and we will annihilate the terrorists soon," Ratwatte said. "We will not allow a small group of people to terrorise the population."

Ratwatte who is also the power and energy minister and a close relative of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, said with the end of the war the government hoped to divert defence funds for development activities.

"I pledge that from the 38 billion rupees (760 million dollars) allocated for defence, we will save half ... and spend it on projects to improve the life of our people," he said.

He said he was attending rallies in the remote area against warnings by security authorities. The LTTE is known to have attacked several villagers in the area in recent months.

"Next time I visit you, it will be after crushing the Tigers," Ratwatte told the mainly Sinhalese villagers who live in constant fear of Tiger attacks.

Meanwhile, in another statement from its London office, the LTTE said Saturday that the military kept up an artillery barrage against three villages in the Vadamarchchi sector of the northern Jaffna peninsula.

The LTTE said a Tamil civilian was injured. Military officials denied shelling civilian targets but admit they deploy helicopter gun ships to bomb identified Tiger targets in the Jaffna peninsula.

Defence sources said 95 automatic assault rifles were recovered from nearly 150 LTTE men and women killed in the Walikamam sector in the past eight days by infantry troops.

"We have sorted out the Tigers who were still hiding in Walikamam," chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said. The military wrested control of Walikamam after nearly 50 days of fighting that ended in December.

The upsurge in violence came as both the security forces and the Tamil Tigers braced for a renewed round of fighting in the Jaffna peninsula, the former citadel of the Tigers who are fighting for independence.

Defence sources said the next phase of intense military operations were likely after the Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrations on April 13 and 14. The new recruits to the army will be ready for fighting by then.

The LTTE had said in recent statements that the army was preparing for another big offensive this month and asked Tamil civilians to move away from the southern parts of the peninsula and go to the northern mainland.

More than 50,000 people have died during the LTTE's independence campaign since 1972.

Sri Lanka: Defense Minister Views Cost of War; Pledges Peace

BK0804035496 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 7 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The government has pledged not to abandon development projects despite the rising defense expenditure. Deputy Minister of Defense General Anuruddha Ratwatte says that the war in the North and East costs the treasury some 390 million rupees per annum. He said that the People's Alliance government would continue to live up to its election pledges while striving to establish peace. General Ratwatte observed that the government was attempting to resolve a crisis, which had been allowed to escalate for the past 17 years.

Sri Lanka: Security Forces Await 'Imminent' LTTE Attack in East

BK0804054296 Colombo SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 7 Apr 96

[Report by Jayampathy Jayasinghe — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Security forces foresee an imminent attack on army, police and STF [Special Task Force] camps situated in Valaichchenai and Batticaloa areas in the light of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) massing up their cadres in Vakarai and Thoppigala areas, defence sources told the Sunday Observer.

The security situation in the Eastern Province needs close monitoring in view of the new development, sources said.

Over 1,000 LTTE cadres led by Jeevan, Banu, Ramesh, Mano, Kali and Karuna are believed to be operating in the jungle areas posing a threat to the security forces stationed in these areas. The LTTE cadres are said to be roaming freely in jungle areas due to closure of about 50 minor army posts in the Trincomalee and Thoppigala areas.

According to security sources a large number of LTTE cadres are believed to have crossed over from the North in the wake of military operations in Valikamam, Chankanai, Vaddukoddai, Alaveddi and Panditirippu last week.

Meanwhile Police said that several lorries and buses from the Multi Purpose Cooperative Society and Batticaloa Central Transport Board Depots were stolen by the Tigers last week.

"We believe the Tigers have stolen these vehicles to transport their cadres. It takes about an hour for them to travel from Thoppigala to Ampara through jungle," police said.

Sri Lanka: Police Detain Woman in Suspected LTTE Passport Fraud

BK0604092696 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 6 Apr 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] POLICE tumbled on what they described as a massive passport racket following the arrest of a Tamil woman with forged French and local passports at the Bandaranaike International Airport on Thursday.

Investigators who believe that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is behind the racket have sought

Interpol assistance to unravel its possible international ramifications.

The suspect woman, a native of Trincomalee had in her possession two French and six local forged passports and also six air tickets to Bangkok.

Police are also looking for the local agent of the racketeers who is believed to have used the woman suspect as the link between him and the LTTE cadres seeking to travel to certain Western countries.

The suspect has been remanded on the orders of the Negombo magistrate.

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